DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 437 769 EC 307 617

AUTHOR	Gosfield, Margaret, Ed.
TITLE	Communicator, 1999.
INSTITUTION	California Association for the Gifted.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	208p.; The CAG Communicator is published four times a year.
AVAILABLE FROM	California Association for the Gifted, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 1670, Los Angeles, CA 90045. (subscription $25 per year). Tel: 650-965-0653; e-mail: CAG Office@aol.com; Web site: http://www.CAGifted.org.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
JOURNAL CIT	Communicator: California Association for the Gifted (CAG); v30 n1-4 Win-Fall 1999
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Ability Identification; Advocacy; Book Reviews; *Child Rearing; Curriculum; Early Childhood Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *Gifted; Labeling (of Persons); Middle Schools; Moral Development; Music Education; Parent Child Relationship; Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; Parenting Skills; Poetry; Portfolio Assessment; Preschool Education; *Reading Instruction; Reading Strategies; Social Development; *Talent Development
IDENTIFIERS	*Differentiated Curriculum (Gifted); International Baccalaureate

ABSTRACT

These four 1999 issues of the "Communicator" address reading needs of gifted children, middle schools, parenting the gifted, and the needs of young gifted children. Featured articles include: (1) "Academic Advocacy for the Forgotten Readers--Gifted and Advanced Learners" (Reading Task Force of the California Association for the Gifted); (2) "Creating Lifetime Readers: Parents Can Make a Difference" (Jody Fickes Shapiro); (3) "Meeting the Needs of Highly Able Children" (Cindy Dooley); (4) "Reading with Young Children" (Nancy Ewald Jackson and Cathy M. Roller); (5) "Scratched Heads and Guffaws" (Bruce Balan); (7) "What Do You Mean Gifted Kids Can't Read?" (Elaine Weiner); (8) "The Gift of Poetry in the Classroom" (Julia Candace Corliss); (9) "Engaging Students in Reading" (Peggy Buzanski); (10) "Gifted Readers and Reading Instruction" (David Levande); (11) "Curriculum To Promote Advanced Reading"; (12) "This We Believe: Philosophy of National Middle School Association Supports Gifted Learners: Does Practice Measure Up?" (Commuter Staff); (13) "Teaching Kids to Care: Character Development and the Middle School Student" (James R. Delisle); (14) "What Parents Want To Know about Gifted Middle School Students and Aren't Afraid To Ask" (Linda Brug); (15) "Addressing the Needs of Middle Grade Gifted Students" (Evelyn Hiatt); (16) "Middle School: The Balancing Act" (Elinor Ruth Smith); (17) "Social Development or Socialization" (Linda Kreger Silverman); (18) "The Middle Years Program for International Baccalaureate" (Barbara Lateer); (19) "Dilemmas in Talent Development in Middle Grades: Two Views" (Margaret Gosfield); (20) "Using Portfolios Effectively in Middle School" (Debra Johnson); (20) "Dilemmas in Talent Development in Middle Grades: Two Views" (Margaret Gosfield); (21) "'Pushy Parents.' Bad Rap or Necessary Role?" (Arlene R. Devries); (22) "Parenting for the New Millennium" (Barry Ziff);

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(23) "Living Successfully with Your Gifted Youngster" (Judith Roseberry); (24) "Labeling: To Tell or Not To Tell" (Paul Plowman); (25) "What Parents Need to Know about Curriculum Differentiation" (Kathleen Patterson); (26) "School to Work" (Louise Stevens); (27) "Creative Ways To Identify Talent in Your K-3 Classroom" (Joan Franklin Smutny); (28) "Understanding and Encouraging Young Gifted Children: Social and Emotional Issues" (Elizabeth Meckstroth); (29) "Brain Development and the Importance of Early Stimulation" (Barbara Clark); (30) "Advocating for Young Gifted Children at School" (Sally Y. Walker); (31) "Portfolios: Documenting the Needs of Young Gifted Learners" (Bertie Kingore); and (32) "Music Education for the Young Gifted" (Kayleen Asbo). Each issue includes curriculum ideas and book reviews. (CR)

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Communicator, 1999

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California Association for the Gifted
Volume 30 Nos. 1-4

COMMUNICATOR

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

VOLUME 30, NO 1, WINTER 1999

ISSUE HIGHLIGHT

GIFTED READERS

Reading is a key component in every child's education. As we support the efforts to assist those children needing remediation, we must also be mindful of the reading needs of gifted and advanced learners. This issue addresses these questions:

Why is academic advocacy necessary and what actions can we take?

What model reading programs have proven effective for gifted and advanced readers?

How can parents provide role models and encourage reading at home?

What teaching strategies and activities best complement the learning styles of gifted readers?

Where can we find guidance in selecting books for advanced readers?

UPCOMING ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Spring - Middle Schools

Summer - Parenting

Fall - Young Gifted

Winter - Math & Science

Academic Advocacy for the Forgotten Readers—Gifted and Advanced Learners

BY THE READING TASK FORCE OF THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

THE CASE FOR ACADEMIC ADVOCACY

Advocating on behalf of gifted students is among the most important activities undertaken by the California Association for the Gifted. However, supporting statutes and fiscal appropriations are not the only types of advocacy; now is the time to engage in academic advocacy. The contemporary emphasis on reading, and state and national initiatives related to developing "every child a reader by third grade," has potentially serious consequences for students who can read and read well. Consider the following common occurrences in our school systems:

- Disproportionate academic and fiscal resources directed toward students experiencing difficulty in learning to read
- Insufficient information available regarding gifted and advanced readers in both educational literature and classroom practices
- Advanced readers recognized only by test scores, when recognized at all
- Advanced readers regressing to the norm when left without resources and classroom support commensurate with their needs and abilities
- Advanced readers relegated to independent reading or groups that have insufficient teacher instruction and interaction

We recognize that all educational reforms elicit both positive and negative responses; we choose to view the potentially detrimental effects of the current reading reform activity as an opportunity to define new areas of need for both teachers and students in the field of gifted education. The current crises in teaching and promoting literacy for students also highlights the need for advocacy on behalf of those students who can read and read well.

There are a number of issues and outcomes related to the contemporary emphasis on developing literacy. The intent of this article is not to refute the value of

See ADVOCACY, 33

EC 307617

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PUBLISHED BY THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

The CAG Communicator is published four times during the year: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Opinions expressed by individual authors do not necessarily represent official positions of the Association. Subscriptions are available to non-members at an annual cost of $25.

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LETTERS

Suggestions for Youth Pages

I'm a parent GATE representative at an elementary school. I wanted to let you know I like the new feature for students, but I did have a couple comments on it.

The deadline date for the contest is way too soon according to some teachers I've spoken to and I wonder if in the future you may consider making the deadline date further into the future. I only received my *Communicator* last week and with the November school activities, it was the general decision to not even present the contest to the students.

Also, printing some of the instructions on the dark blue background makes it very difficult to photocopy, at least for our machine.

In the future, I'd like to see our students taking part in your contests and hope you'll consider some of my comments.

Susan Yip
Commodore Sloat Elementary
San Francisco

P.S. I especially enjoyed reading the article on effective communication with your child's teacher.

Editor's Note
We agree on both points in regard to the students' challenge page. You will find this issue's challenge page easier to photocopy. Also, we have decided to run student responses two issues later rather than the one following. That way we can extend the deadlines. Thank you for sharing your ideas.

Thanks

Thanks for sending me a copy of the *Communicator*. We are proud to have our center's research included in the Fall issue.

Joe Renzulli, *Director*
National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
Storrs, Connecticut

Sharing the Information

Perhaps I should have asked you-all first, but I posted [a description of the fall issue] to the GT-Special listserve...GT-S targets parents and educators of twice-special kids. It is a fairly new list and has a good, international following. 'Hope you don't mind the publicity.

Janine Packett

Editor's Note
Thanks for sharing the information. We encourage as many people as possible to become members of CAG and receive the Communicator as a member's benefit. But for those who choose, the option of being a subscriber only is also available. Please see the application form on the back cover.

List Rings True

Just read your article, and enjoyed it immensely. Your "Common myths and assumptions" list could have come directly from the mouths of both my son's teacher and the school principal. Our GATE budget shows teacher education funds turned back in unused for the last three years. I don't know of even one teacher who has attended a GATE conference or any GATE training in our entire district.

Donna Woods

CORRECTION

In the fall issue, we inadvertently listed an incorrect e-mail address. For those wishing to reach Dr. Martin Eaton for more information on his Learning for Success program, the correct e-mail address is:
learningforsuccess@earthlink.net.

CALENDAR

CAG BOARD MEETINGS
JANUARY 22–24, 1999
Sacramento Hyatt

Board Meetings are open to the public. If a meeting is scheduled in your area and you wish to attend, please call the CAG office for specific information.

■

CAG CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS
JANUARY 16, 1999
Santa Clara Westin

■

37TH ANNUAL CAG CONFERENCE
MARCH 5–7, 1999
CAG 37th Annual Conference, "Navigating New Pathways." Westin Hotel and Santa Clara Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA

■

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
JULY 30–AUGUST 1, 1999
18th Annual SENG Conference, "Reflecting on Our Past, Envisioning Our Future." Chicago, IL

AUGUST 2–6, 1999
13th Biennial World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, "Gifted and Talented: A Challenge for the New Millennium, Istanbul, Turkey. For details, call 818-368-7501.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

March 5-7, 1999

37th Annual CAG Conference

"Navigating New Pathways"

Westin Hotel and Santa Clara Convention Center

The California Association for the Gifted serves its members in many valuable ways:

- **Institutes and conferences for educators and families**
- **Parenting strategies to nurture giftedness**
- **Advocacy to assure funds for GATE programs**
- **Publications about differentiated curriculum and contemporary issues affecting gifted students**

CAG is a mission-driven, volunteer administered, non-profit association.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

MARGE HOCTOR

I am pleased with the Editor's choice of reading as a focus for this issue of the *Communicator*. The acquisition of reading skills has always been a key component when planning educational programs for students. At present, reading is receiving even more focus. With the California Department of Education's goal that every child be a reader by third grade, and the expectation that students participating in the primary class size reduction program will improve reading skills, there has been a tremendous increase in staff development opportunities for teachers of reading.

A major concern however, is that much of the focus is on children who are struggling to learn to read. These children are of concern and educators are obligated to meet their needs, but the recent focus of staff development programs has been on them to the exclusion of the able reader. How do we meet the needs of students who go quickly from requiring instruction on "learning to read," to being ready for instruction on "reading to learn."

I recently attended a three-hour reading seminar for primary teachers. The entire session focused on strategies for the student who is having trouble learning to read. The only time devoted to the capable reader was when I asked a question. My question was answered briefly and then the discussion moved on. There were no follow-up sessions planned to address the advanced reader.

Students who come to school reading, or who learn very quickly once provided formal instruction, are in the unique position of being in the minority in most classrooms. They are often required to go through the same learning process as the rest of the class, used as a tutors, or left on their own to do "independent study."

One effective way to meet the needs of these students is to focus on skills they will need to become proficient users of electronic media. The fact that the Internet is the source of a wealth of information makes it important that students acquire sophisticated reading skills in order to successfully find information. They will need to know more than just how to locate and save information. In order to search and find information useful for a specific research assignment, students will need a variety of reading skills including skimming and scanning, finding topic or main idea, separating relevant from irrelevant, judging material for accuracy, and recognizing bias based on the content of the material or the source of the information. These are skills that can be taught whether or not a school or classroom has access to the Internet by using textbooks, magazine or journal articles, or information downloaded from Internet sites.

In addition to this issue of the *Communicator*, CAG is involved in other projects supporting the needs of the able reader. One such project in process is an International Reading Project involving our Sister Organization for gifted students in Moscow, Russia. Led by Sandra Kaplan in California and Natasha Choumakova in Moscow, 4th through 6th grade students in gifted classes in four public schools in Moscow are developing Russian fairy tales and accompanying reading comprehension questions written in English which will be sent to GATE classes in California. California students are developing American legends with accompanying questions to be sent to Russian classes.

You will find information throughout this issue which will be useful to you as you become or continue to be an advocate for appropriate reading opportunities for gifted and advanced learners. ■

MARGARET GOSFIELD

The inspiration for the focus of this issue began two years ago when CAG's Board of Directors established a Reading Task Force under the leadership of Special Projects Chair, Sandra Kaplan. The purpose of the task force was to prepare and distribute an advocacy document that would focus attention on the needs of gifted readers in a school reform environment that centers almost exclusively on children who need remedial reading assistance. CAG does not oppose efforts to serve children with reading problems, but just as in many other educational arenas, the issue has to do with proportion. Readers who already read and read well, should not be neglected while remediation efforts are being made for others.

A draft document was prepared and distributed at last year's annual conference along with an invitation to readers to respond with suggestions for improving the paper. After many recommendations and with considerable thought and revision, we have prepared a final draft.

Dissemination of the document to all our members through the *Communicator* seemed a natural course; and it followed that we could focus even more attention on the needs of gifted readers by devoting an entire issue to the topic. The results are in your hands.

Supplementing the advocacy article, David Lavande provides us with background information and recommendations for model reading programs for gifted students. Cindy Dooley's recommendation of flexible grouping elaborates on a specific model and points out that with such flexibility, teachers can shift groups at any time to accommodate student interests as well as instructional needs.

Several classroom teachers share their experiences in teaching reading and literature to gifted students. Peggy Buzanski combines theories of multiple intelligences and stages of moral development in preparing classroom reading activities for her students, while Elaine Weiner points out some of the gaps that gifted readers may have in their reading skills but which are often overlooked. Candace Corliss presents the advantages of poetry in the classroom and dedicates a poem to all teachers who "bring the gift of poetry into their classroom." Brian Crosby shares his remedy for making sure that high school gifted students are exposed to literary classics.

Bruce Balan speaks to both teachers and parents when he urges us to recognize that the first step in introducing children to read is to let them read what they want to read. Their choices might not be ours, but if we expect to create strong readers, our most important task is to instill in them the love of reading. He shares some of his own growing up experiences and the reading choices that helped shape his own thinking and later writing. We are very pleased that Bruce will be a featured speaker at our annual conference, serving as the keynote speaker for the student seminar and presenting a special address for adults at the parent conference on Sunday.

Jody Fickes Shapiro goes a step further by recommending that parents continue to read out loud to and with their children well into their teen years, giving many compelling reasons for doing so. LaDona Hein presents the questioning techniques that Deborah Kleffman, a GATE parent in Pleasanton, employs in reading discussions with her children.

The youth section includes a student book review by Natalie Cohen, and we hope to include student reviews in succeeding issues as well. We learned very quickly that we had misjudged the amount of time we need to allow for student responses to challenges. Therefore, the deadline for all challenges included in the fall issue are being extended, along with new ones to engage students. From now on, selected student responses will appear two issues after the first appearance of a challenge item, providing the additional time needed. We hope all parents and teachers will encourage their children and students to participate.

I would like to again invite you to JOIN THE DISCUSSION. Tell us what you like about this issue of the *Communicator* and where you see need for improvement. We would especially like to hear about your school or district's means of accommodating gifted readers, and how parents encourage reading experiences at home. If we have a sufficient response, we will make plans to print them as a special feature in another issue. We must continue to share ideas to accomplish our goal of providing the greatest possible support for our gifted learners. ■

Creating Lifetime Readers: Parents Can Make a Difference

BY JODY FICKES SHAPIRO

"One of the most significant reasons to continue reading aloud to older children, is that it lays the groundwork for lifelong communication between parent and child."

Four times a year I have the privilege of speaking to a group of new parents at one of our local hospitals. I have no problem convincing these eager moms and dads that their babies need books. This generation of young parents are the beneficiaries of literacy campaigns such as the Association of Booksellers for Children and American Academy of Pediatrics' Twenty Minutes a Day. They have seen articles about early language development and the role that books play in developing vocabulary and attention span. My task is merely to show them the best books available. The babies' immediate responses to the books just reinforces my message.

My difficulty is convincing parents to continue reading aloud to their children into their early teens. For many reasons parents begin to drop that activity too soon. I am often asked, "Why continue reading books aloud to my kids now that they can read on their own?"

Here are some reasons why:

Establishes lifelong communication

One of the most significant reasons to continue reading aloud to older children, is that it lays the groundwork for lifelong communication between parent and child. At an age where children begin to develop closer ties with their peers than their families, the simple daily act of reading together keeps open the channels of communication. Books as a catalyst for meaningful conversation became the most valued part of our day when my children were approaching adolescence. We could always go back and reread a passage or a chapter in a book when we interrupted ourselves to discuss something. Unlike the passive viewing of a television program or movie, we, the readers and the listeners, were always in charge of the pacing.

Children's interests exceed their recreational reading level

Our kids often have interests that exceed their recreational reading level. I am making a distinction between formal tested reading level and "recreational" reading level. We can all decode more difficult text but wouldn't necessarily sit down to read a psychology textbook for relaxation. There are authors who write wonderfully well, like Lloyd Alexander, for example, whose "Prydain Chronicles" can be read aloud to eight-year-olds but aren't often read independently until several years later. Therefore parents can introduce children to books that match their imaginations if not their reading skill.

Support for reluctant readers

There are some children who, for whatever physical reason, are not comfortable readers. These are the children who must be read to by a combination of parents, teachers, peers, and books on tape. At some point in their maturation, they will become readers. And for the few who never develop a love of reading or any inclination to read for pleasure, at least they have been kept culturally literate. They know Charlotte and Wilbur, and that superheros like Ulysses and Achilles are not just cartoon characters. They have pored over David Macauley's buildings and unbuildings, developed a relationship with Lincoln through the fine text of Russell Freeman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, or even memorized a Shel Silverstein poem after repeated requests to "read it again."

Provide role models

There are many ways to encour-

age more reading in a home environment or in a classroom besides reading aloud. Adults who read for pleasure are models. Talking about and quoting from articles in newspape or magazines are some things adults often do among themselves. Include children in on those experiences and encourage them to read aloud things they want to share. Provide a variety of reading material in the home. Give gifts of books. Use public and school libraries. Find like-minded parents through your own PTA, church or neighborhood who are interested in a child and parent book discussion group similar to the adult reading groups that are gaining popularity.

Teachers are using reading circles in the classroom to evoke book-centered active interaction between students. Some middle schools are opening their libraries to the students at the lunch recess for book clubs. Our own bookstore, Adventures for Kids, sponsors a family reading group in the summer. Perhaps you have an independent bookstore in your community that would be interested in working with you as well.

You may have ideas we haven't thought of and would be willing to share them with other parents and teachers who read the *Communicator.*

Just don't give up the opportunity to share the treasure trove of children's literature with your own family. We have so many adults who have confessed that they read children's books as much for their own enjoyment as for their kids. All it takes to get started is a good book and the willingness to share a block of twenty relaxed precious minutes a day. You and your kids are worth it. ■

JODY FICKES SHAPIRO is a children's literature consultant and owner of Adventures for Kids children's bookstore in Ventura, California. She is also the parent of two gifted sons.

The CAG Board's List of Favorite Childrens' Bookstores

We asked members of the CAG Board of Directors to share with us the names of their favorite childrens' book stores. We chose not to include any national chains in the list since they are much broader in scope; we are aware, however, that many have significant collections of childrens' books within their larger stores. We encourage you to frequent these and other local bookstores to assist you in supporting your gifted reader's need for good books.

FRESNO
Pegasus Books & Gifts for Young People
Mission Village Shopping Center
349 E. Shaw Avenue
Fresno, CA 93710
209-221-8524

Petunia's Place
2017 W. Bullard Avenue
Fresno, CA 93711
209-438-1561

IRVINE
Whale of a Tale
University Center
4199 Campus Drive, Suite A
Irvine, CA 92612
949-854-8288

LA JOLLA
White Rabbit Childrens' Bookstore
7755 Girard Avenue
La Jolla, CA 92037
619-454-3518

LAVERNE
Mrs. Nelson's Bookstore
1030 Bonita Avenue
LaVerne CA 91750
909-599-4558

LOS ANGELES
Children's Book World
10580 1/2 Pico Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90064
310-559-2665

MISSION VIEJO
Reading Rhinoceros
24000 Alicia Parkway
Mission Viejo, CA
714-588-0898

MONTROSE
Once Upon A Time
2284 Honolulu Avenue
Montrose, CA 91020
818-248-9668

NAPA
Napa Children's Book Co.
1239 First Street
Napa, CA 94559
707-224-3893

REDDING
Redding Bookstore
1712 California
Redding, CA 96001
530-246-2171

REDLANDS
Frugal Frigate
9 North 6th Street
Redlands,CA 92373
909-793-0740

SAN JOSE
Hicklebee's Children's Books
1378 Lincoln Avenue
San Jose, CA 93125
408-292-8880

SAN FRANCISCO
Cover to Cover
3910 24th Street
San Francisco, CA 94114
415-282-8080

SAN MARINO
San Marino Toys and Books
2424 Huntington Drive
San Marino, CA 91108
626-309-0222

TARZANA
PAGES
18399 Ventura Boulevard
Tarzana, CA 91356
818-34-BOOKS

UKIAH
The Mendocino Book Company
102 South School Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
707-468-5940

VENTURA
Adventures for Kids
3457 Telegraph Road
Ventura, CA 93003
805-650-9688

Beyond the Pages of a Book

BY LADONA HEIN

Reading to and with your child is one of the most important privileges you will have as a parent, and modeling of reading can be done in many ways. Children often let you know when they are ready to listen to a story, but it is of utmost importance to make books and other written materials available at a very young age.

"Reading should be enjoyable whether it is for pleasure or for information. Your child should not feel a quiz is necessary every time you read together."

There is more to reading than simply picking up a book, reading the story, or walking through the pictures when a child is very young. You want the story to flow and to captivate the child. It is important to be enthusiastic, dramatic, and relaxed. You should also be sensitive to the needs of your child; some children like to be read to often and for long periods of time. Others like short stories and short periods of "book time."

Before children enter school it is fun to create an awareness of print. A bulletin board can be displayed in the kitchen entitled, "I can read." Children can display cereal boxes, fast food containers, their names, colors, and numbers.

Many children automatically have a desire to learn to read and gifted children often display this interest at a very young age. It is up to us to spark their curiosity. Reading for pleasure and reading for information can be the same or different. Gifted children enjoy challenge beyond just, "What color is John's shirt?" They are eager to learn more. It is up to us to stimulate their thinking. This can often be accomplished by questioning strategies.

Deborah Kleffman, parent of two gifted children in the Pleasanton Unified School District shares the following questioning techniques when reading with her children and finds them very useful:

Skill builder-type questions

- Can you touch the page where the new paragraph begins?
- How many paragraphs can you find on this page?
- What is the root word in "digging"?
- Let's look at the punctuation in this sentence. (Pointing out various forms of punctuation assists the child in reading, writing, and speaking.
- What was the important information we learned in this story?
- What is the superlative form of _____?
- What is an adjective and how is it used in the preceding sentence? Can you think of another adjective that might be better?
- Why do you think the word _____ begins with a capital letter?

Comprehension-type questions

- What would you do if you had the same problem as the character in the story?
- What happened first, second, third in the story?
- How would you describe the main character?
- How would you write the ending of the story? Would it be the same or different?

It is important to ask these questions naturally. One or two of the preceding questions could be asked after reading a couple of pages. Reading should be enjoyable whether it is for pleasure or for information. Your child should not feel a quiz is necessary every time you read together. If your child enjoys it, then keep asking questions. If you sense this is not the approach to take when reading with your child, do not continue.

Making Reading Relevant

Deborah maintains that as children get older, it is important to help them make what they are reading relevant to real life. She suggests that parents talk to their children about how reading changes as we have life experiences; she shares this personal event:

> *My 4th grade daughter and I read* Of Mice and Men *out loud together. She had complained that the plots of the stories at school were too boring. The vocabulary was fine, but the plots were lacking.*
>
> *Many issues were raised: Foreshadowing. When the dog was shot, it foreshadowed the killing of Lenny.*

Euthanasia and Dr. Kervorkian were discussed. Oregon laws regarding doctor-assisted suicides were discussed. I asked my daughter what she thought of these topics. We discussed the pro and con arguments in these examples. Then I shared our personal family values on the topics. We were able to get into a real world contemporary discussion on the topic of mercy killings.

I would also stop the story and say, "Did you know that adults are reading between the lines on what just happened here? That sentence to us, because we are adults with more life experience, let's us know that Curly's wife is going to be big trouble. Let me tell you about the racial and labor climate when this story was written." I later asked her how things have changed since then and what aspects of human nature are timeless in this story.

There were definitely items in the novel that we did not discuss, because they went over her head and I felt she didn't need to be exposed to them at her age.

Parents are powerful role models in everything they do, and reading is no exception. Children recognize the importance adults attach to reading, and the pleasures and benefits it provides. Reading to and with your child is not a simple matter; it goes far beyond the pages of a book. ■

LADONA HEIN is Associate Editor for Parent Topics and invites parents to share their experiences in raising gifted children. She can be reached by e-mail at dlhein@juno.com.

CHILDRENS BOOKS ONLINE

With our current busy lifestyles, many of us find it convenient to shop for books online (though nothing can compare with the pleasure of browsing through a well-stocked bookstore!!). Our thanks to Sharon and Dennis Freitas, CAG's Parent Chair and Webmaster, respectively, for providing the selected sites listed below.

Association for Library Service to Children
www.ala.org/alsc
The Association for Library Service to Children is interested in the improvement and extension of library services to children in all types of libraries. It is responsible for the evaluation and selection of book and nonbook library materials and for the improvement of techniques of library service to children from preschool through the eighth grade or junior high school age. You may especially wish to click on "For Parents & Caregivers" and "Cool Sites for Kids."

Barnes and Noble
www.barnesandnoble.com
Barnes and Noble claims to be the world's largest bookseller online. A search of "children's literature" yielded 8,114 titles available for purchase, and an additional 4,055 out of print and used titles. You can also click on "kids" to view their complete list of topics of books for children. Some books are available at a discount price.

Children's Literature
www.childrenslit.com
Children's Literature publishes a monthly newsletter of reviews, and also publishes bibliographies and other guides to children's literature. Its website includes sample reviews and profiles of authors and illustrators. You may also purchase books online.

Children's Literature also provides a searchable index by category of children's literature resources available on the Internet. Topics include book reviews, storytelling, writing, reading, publishers, best-sellers, award-winning book selections including Newbery and Caldecott, and more.

Just for Kids
www.just-for-kids.com/
Just for Kids offers thousands of books for and about kids, all at a discount from full retail. They list books by age levels including: Infant and toddler, ages 4-8, ages 9-12, and young adult. You should be mindful that when seeking books for gifted children, you may need to look at a higher age level than given.

They also list books by topic. You will find "gifted" as a subhead under "Educational."

LandMark Editions
www.LandmarkEditions.com
LandMark Editions publishes books for students by students. They hold a contest each year, inviting students to submit original works for publication. At least one book is selected each year from each of three age levels ranging from six to nineteen years of age.

Winning entries from 1986 through 1997 are available for purchase. The site also includes rules and guidelines for the 1999 contest with a deadline for manuscripts of May 1, 1999.

YAHOO!
www.yahoo.com
Yahoo offers an extensive and easy mode of purchasing books online, with most books sold at a discount. If you access Yahoo through CAG (www.CAGifted.org), CAG will receive a portion of the proceeds.

Yahoo also provides extensive search possibilities; a search for "children's literature" resulted in a match of six categories and 194 sites for children's literature.

Meeting the Needs of Highly Able Readers Through Flexible Grouping

BY CINDY DOOLEY

The challenge of meeting the needs of diverse readers in a heterogeneous classroom while creating a community of learners in which students work together to accomplish shared goals is daunting for most classroom teachers. In this classroom, all students are provided opportunities to develop a sense of self-efficacy as they complete meaningful learning experiences that enable them to acquire important skills and concepts that they do not individually possess. At the same time, establishing an environment in which all learners see themselves as competent members and equal contributors to the classroom learning community seems to suggest that the needs of the group, rather than the individual, are of utmost concern. How does the teacher of a heterogeneous group of students achieve these seemingly contradictory goals? The use of flexible grouping within a theme-centered reading and language arts program in which a variety of differentiated learning experiences are provided is one means through which these goals can be achieved.

Flexible Grouping

As criticisms of ability grouping grew (Allington, 1980; Barr, 1989; Indrisano & Parratore, 1991) and whole language perspectives emerged as alternative approaches to literacy instruction (Goodman, 1986), whole class reading instruction became common in many classrooms (Lapp & Flood, 1992). However, the use of whole class instruction in which the same materials and processes are used with all students makes it difficult to address the needs of individual students. In response to the weaknesses of both ability grouping and whole class instruction, flexible grouping emerged as a viable instructional format (Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992).

A literacy program developed through the use of flexible grouping accommodates the needs of students with a range of abilities through a variety of whole class, small group, partner, and individual activities. Whole class and small group settings are used to provide heterogeneous activities that allow students to view themselves as a community of learners who have common interests and goals. While these experiences are important in a literacy program, homogeneous small group and partner activities and individual differentiated learning experiences must be included to challenge each student to develop new skills and strategies. When homogeneous small group, partner, and individualized activities slightly beyond students' current levels of literacy development are provided, each student develops new understandings about the theme of study and moves toward a higher level of communicative competence.

When flexible grouping is used, the composition of small groups and partnerships is not fixed, but shifts as new groups are formed to accommodate students' interests and instructional needs. In this setting, students do not view themselves as members of fixed small groups or partnerships associated with particular ability levels. Instead, students see themselves as members of a variety of collaborative groups in which their contributions are not only valued, but essential to the successful completion of a task.

Theme-Centered Literacy Programs

The selection of an appropriate theme is crucial to the success of a language arts curriculum that utilizes flexible grouping to meet the needs of individual learners within a community environment. The guidelines that follow can be used to select a theme that provides

See HIGHLY ABLE READERS, 35

Reading With Young Children

An abstract of a report from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented

BY NANCY EWALD JACKSON & CATHY M. ROLLER

This report provides research-based answers to questions parents and teachers often ask about how reading and writing develop from infancy to about age 6 years. The unusually rapid development of these skills in some young children is considered in a major section on precocious readers. Precocious reading ability is a form of gifted intellectual performance that may appear alone or together with other kinds of gifted performance. However, this report was not written only for those who are concerned with the development or education of gifted children. Much of the report addresses general questions about the development of reading and writing ability in young children who may have other gifts. Each major section of the report was written so that it can stand alone, and each contains a separate reference list and list of recommended resources for parents and teachers.

The research literatures summarized in this report reveal that literacy development begins very early as the 2- or 3-year-old child acquires a broad base of knowledge and skills in the context of a wide range of activities and experiences. Learning to identify and print letters and words are important parts of beginning to read and write, but early literacy development also encompasses learning about the nature of stories, the characteristics and functions of print, and the sound patterns of oral language. Aspects of reading and writing skills are likely to develop in predictable sequences, but individual children's development across skill areas may be uneven. Literacy-related activities are most likely to nurture a child's development if they are geared to the child's current level of understanding and interest. The reasons why some children become precocious readers are not well understood. Precocious readers are likely to have a solid repertoire of reading skills, but individuals differ in their relative strengths, and precocious readers may not be equally advanced in other skill areas, such as writing or reasoning. Precocious readers are likely to remain good readers, but children who have not started early often catch up. Early assessment of a child's reading and writing skills may facilitate the development of appropriate curriculum for both precocious and slow-to-develop readers.

Conclusions

1. During the preschool years, children begin understanding that print has meaning, that writing takes particular forms, and that words consist of sets of sounds.
2. Effective story reading involves talking about the story and listening to the child's reactions.
3. A child's mastery of oral language is likely to be one of the most critical factors in a child's success in reading. In early reading development, the child's developing knowledge of letters, sounds, words, and aspects of a story is important. In later development, wide-ranging knowledge of the world and the ability to express it becomes more critical.
4. In early writing as in early reading, preschool children initially use unconventional forms that gradually develop into the conventional forms used by adults. A child's early reading and writing skills sometimes develop in parallel sequences, but there is evidence that one area may develop more rapidly than another.
5. While learning to read involves much more than learning to name letters and recognize their sounds, learning letter names and sounds and the relationships between them is an important part of early literacy development.
6. Reading failure in later years can be prevented by the early identification of reading difficulties, followed by appropriate instruction.
7. Precocious reading is an example of giftedness as defined by the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988. ■

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COME, SEEK A BOOK

Come, let us seek a book
With math and fun and games
Where lions and all creatures
Have fun and create names
Come, let us meet Rapunzel
The prince and the emperor too
Where stories seek and pages peek
To see the smile on you
Come, let us share some art
Of Picasso and Mattise
Just come and let us seek
Let us seek a book

Alexa Shoenfeld, Age 8
Mirman School, Los Angeles

SCRATCHED HEADS AND GUFFAWS

Introducing Kids to Good Books

BY BRUCE BALAN

Go Dog Go. A Wrinkle in Time. The Lorax. Half Magic. The Outsiders. Charlotte's Web. The BFG. The Peep-Larssons Go Sailing. The Hobbit. Frog and Toad Together. The Stupids. I Was a Second Grade Werewolf. The Chocolate War. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. The Cay.

These are some of my all-time favorite children's books. But look at the titles again. Can you tell which of them I actually read as a *child*? Probably not. So I'll tell you.

One third. That's it. Some of these books I am sure you've read. Some you may never have heard of. But for me, the books in this list have all had an impact on my life. And, as I've just admitted, most of them have had that impact on my adult life. One of the reasons I became a children's book author is because I love books. I love reading. And I love reading children's books. In my profession, I am never without a reason to pick up a children's book. *It's part of my job*, I am allowed say. Research. So I've read many more children's books as an adult than as a child. Of course, I do have to own up to the unfortunate fact that I've also spent more years as an adult than as a child.

When people ask me what makes a great children's book, I tell them what I think. But if I stopped for a moment, I would realize that, truthfully, I may have forgotten. Because missing from the list at the top of the page are these books:

- *Tom Swift and his Spectromarine Selector* (Or *Polar-Ray Dynasphere*. Or *Flying Lab. Or Jetmarine*. Or. Well, Tom's list is a long one.)
- *Homer Price*
- *The Mad Scientist Club Series*
- *Farmer in the Sky, Glory Road, Starman Jones* and everything else by Heinlein
- *The Encyclopedia Brown Series*
- *Love Story*

Wait! *Love Story?* Yes, *Love Story*. I'll come back to that later. I devoured all the books in this second list during fourth, fifth and sixth grades in the gifted program (then called MGM) in the Garden Grove Unified School District. And it was these books, as well as a few from the first list, that helped me to discover that the ability to read was one of the greatest gifts I had been given.

I was fortunate that Mrs. Clunk and Mrs. Roseberry, my fourth- and fifth-grade teachers, felt it was important to read out loud to their classes. Mrs. Clunk first introduced me to the wonders of Narnia in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. I'll never forget listening to Mrs. Roseberry read *A Wrinkle in Time* as I sat dreaming the story, head upon desk—so hot and lazy in the Southern California late-summer heat (no air conditioning in the bungalows). It is a wonderful memory that I will cherish. But, after school when I returned home, did I pick up classics like these? No way. Having parents that were teachers and who understood the value of letting me pick my own path into the world of literature, they encouraged me to read whatever I wanted. And I did. I soon found out that there simply were not enough Tom Swift books available on the planet.

Have you ever read one? How about *The Hardy Boys* or *Nancy Drew*. These books don't exactly meet the definition of great literature. I'm sure if I picked up one of my tattered Tom Swift Jr. books today, there would be a great deal of writing that would make me cringe. But at ten years old, it was simply the best. Does it matter what I think of these books now?

Our Favorite Books Are Favorites Because They Are *Ours*

We hunger for our children to excel. We unconsciously feel that great books contain some sort of magic that can help young people make their way in the world. We have experienced intense joy reading certain books and want to

share that experience with these small beings we love so much. We know reading is good for us and therefore, reading good books is really good for us. We want our kids to be happy.

All of these seem like wonderful reasons to allow us to direct the reading habits of our children. Yet not one of them overcomes the fact that our children are not us. They are different people growing up in a different time. What appeals to them makes us scratch our heads. What appeals to us, makes them guffaw. Which is why, when trying to introduce kids to good books, the first step is to let them read what they want. But isn't our opinion worth something? It depends on what those opinions are based.

I want adults to read children's books. I think it is healthy because children's books help us shift our sometimes rigid grown-up perspective toward one of acceptance. Just holding a children's book has that effect. Immediately we are less judgmental of what is inside—not in terms of quality —but in terms of what is allowed to happen. That's a good thing. But because writers, publishers, editors, librarians, reviewers, and educators are almost always adults, we sometimes lose perspective about what makes a really great children's book. There are thousands of children's books that adults appreciate which are not interesting to many kids. Because most children's book awards are chosen by adults, there are prestigious award winners that don't appeal to young people. Why? Because these books are written by *adults for adults who enjoy children's literature*. And that's fine. As I said, I think all adults should read children's books. But we need to be honest about what makes a good book. And it isn't always what we, as adults, decide. We need to tell the truth about books that may be praised by adults, but which really don't contain the kind of writing that appeals to a great many children.

If our kids don't want to read the "great" books we've discovered, what will they read? Surely not that mass-market, repetitious slop. No, please! Not *series!*

When my *Cyber.kdz* books were first published, I often ran into a wall of dismissal when trying to promote the books to librarians and reviewers. "A series?" they would say, and turn away. Granted, there are many series which are not well-written. And now the media corporations that own publishing houses bombard us with a hit until we can't stand it anymore. But that isn't the point. The same people who scoff at today's series, grew up reading their own series: *The Bobbsey Twins, Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys,* and, of course, *Tom Swift*. I know hundreds of people who love children's books. They read the books. They sell the books. They create the books. They breathe children's literature. And there isn't one that read only "classics" when they were young.

"... allowing a young person the freedom to fly off the reading rails they may have created for themselves is the sign of a sensitive parent or teacher."

We need to remember that engendering a desire to read is the most important element in creating strong readers. The best way to create that desire is to encourage kids to read what they enjoy.

This Isn't Court

If I went back in time to visit the child I was—journeying there with my professional appreciation for children's literature intact— I'm sure I would be appalled by some of the reading choices I made. But seeing where those choices have lead me, how can I condemn them? Few people judge me today on my childhood addiction to Tom Swift. I was lucky that no one judged me back then either. Judging a child's choices does not promote a love of reading.

Support Unconventional Selections

I promised that I would get back to that question about *Love Story*. How did it get on my second list? When I was in sixth grade, my father died of leukemia. This was shortly after Erich Segal's book hit the bestseller lists. If you've never read it, it's important to know that one of the main characters in the story also dies of leukemia. I don't remember who first mentioned the book to me, but I do know that my mother and my teacher, Miss Jennings, both encouraged me to read it. It was a profound experience. I remember sobbing with grief when Jenny died—grief for her, her husband, my mother, my family, myself. And those tears, along with the ones I shed upon my first solo reading of *Charlotte's Web*, ran down my cheeks, over my chin, across my neck to my chest. And there, flowed into my heart where they instilled forever the desire to experience emotion with a book in my hand.

It was, I believe, a bold move to let a sixth grader read a book like *Love Story*. But allowing a young person the freedom to fly off the reading rails they may have created for themselves is the sign of a sensitive parent or teacher. Of course, judgment is called for. But

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What do You Mean Gifted Kids Can't Read?

The Subtleties of a Supplemental Reading Program

BY ELAINE WIENER

Very articulate readers, Katrina McLellan, Bryan Wong, Kevin Nguyen, and Ben Kwon read for pleasure in Mrs. Wiener's classroom.

With all the fanfare for improving reading skills for the average learner, public focus seems to bypass our GATE children who are so fluent and such voracious readers.

Within the field of gifted education, we want neither to stress basic skills by tediously waiting for mastery before moving on; nor do we naively think the basics will magically take care of themselves while we revel in those more illusive creative strategies. Most gifted programs employ parallel approaches so that we weave a basic skills foundation with invigorating mental challenges.

However, as in diets and philosophies, it is difficult to keep a balanced program. Sometimes there is a gray area which slips by us. It hovers like a time warp, between the realm of adequate reader and gifted reader. There is always a group of gifted children who fit into this puzzling zone. It is a category we could call, "Something's Missing—But What?" These children sound like gifted readers, look like gifted readers, and can answer certain questions at the highest levels of thinking because, indeed, they are gifted. But something is still missing.

And here is where we must strive to keep the curriculum at a high level while pulling out moments to "mend" the missing skills. The trick is to recognize when there are missing skills because the children are so adept at compensating for what they don't know—and don't know they don't know.

This is the moment when their skills slip right through our judgments. Because these children are often very intuitive, can transfer knowledge from discipline to discipline, and above all can grasp ongoing discussions, it is not always discernible that they do not understand what they are reading.

Frequently they cannot infer answers from logical observations in the story. Repeatedly they omit sequences of events when asked. Lower and middle level questions are more difficult for these students because those questions require facts more than judgments as evidence for their responses.

These contrasting errors may occur more easily in a supplemental reading program where the focus is reading many works by one author or several children reading the same book as in a book club; reading for pleasure seems to have more casual expectations for "thinking." Perhaps the children relate thinking expectations of pleasure reading to the informal repose of sitting in corners to read.

When these skill gaps are analyzed, there seems to be a common set of habits.

Inadequate vocabulary

This can be due to English as a developing second language. However, this problem also exists for many native English speakers. We can only speculate causes:

Inadequate vocabulary can be affected by after school day care where children are with many other children for several hours, speaking to very few adults.

Vocabulary can also be influenced by the level of leisure reading books being relegated mainly to joke books, etc. Children, today, are given considerably more power over choices not permitted in past eras.

It can also be due to a general lack of conversation in the home simply because dinner hour no longer exists at a table or is so late in the day that bedtime occurs before time is available to talk.

The scapegoat "TV" is still a vocabulary killer if the programming is not wisely chosen; even if it is wisely chosen but there are no adults around to define the vocabulary or discuss what was learned, a potential opportunity for developing vocabulary may be lost.

There is also the possibility that our whole society has become so relaxed in its manners and mannerisms that its language patterns are at lower demanding levels of understanding.

Logically, it can be a combination and interaction of all the above and more.

Poor "physical" reading habits

Because these children skip or gloss over words they do not understand, they develop a skipping habit. We all skip words and infer meaning from the sentence, but when this happens

too often, the "skips" almost outnumber the "reads." And in time, the skips are done from habit, not necessity. At first glance, it would appear that the reading material is too difficult. But under supervision—including just having the teacher sit near—the children have no trouble understanding with just a moment's thought. This is really a concentration problem, but so many "body" actions are involved—eyes, head, arms—it feels "physical."

Poor inference skills, but not really poor inference skills

Even brilliant human beings must know facts from which to infer any meaning. It turns out that most of the time the problem is that the children did not read all the information. Sometimes this is vocabulary related, but more often it involves passages which require some thought and patience and maturity.

Lazy habits

This is a tricky judgment because, as adults, we allow ourselves the right to skim over laborious passages or areas we find less interesting. We have the privilege, in our private reading to do as we wish. However, this is a right of passage after we know how to answer questions when we have to. When are children allowed this freedom without creating bad habits?

Lucia Rafanelli, Kendra Hart, and Kim Dang demonstrate their excellent reading skills in Mrs. Wiener's class.

These four problem areas seem to evolve from inadequate vocabulary and a lack of focus which then contribute to sloppy, lazy, though logical habits. The following suggestions work well in combination with a basic reading program.

Design mini-reading lessons

Design mini-reading lessons for the sole purpose of "mending" specific skill deficits. These are the deficits which appear in our discussions from the supplemental reading program. For example, if the children could not recall the sequence of several events, search together for these details in the related book. But, in addition, provide passages from test booklets or Weekly Readers, etc. for continuing practice.

These are short, brief passages, and we analyze them to death. We NEVER call them reading. We call them skills. We call them "brain exercises." The approach is one of a detective, looking for clues to the errors. Children learn many reading strategies in basic reading programs which often fail to transfer to other books where thinking without worksheets or writing is expected.

Pull vocabulary from a reading circle book

When several children are reading duplicate copies of one book for reading circles, pull vocabulary from that book for a small prep session before the children start reading. Although vocabulary pre-teaching is common in fine basic reading programs, it is rarely done in "literature" reading.

Use scribble sheets

No one wants to stop reading for a definition of a word. Require an agreement that the children will scribble words they don't know on a scribble sheet to add to a collection which can later be used in unlimited ways for vocabulary practice and usage.

Use black bookmark

Use a black bookmark to keep children's eyes tracking. Although this is very helpful to children with tracking problems, it is used here to break the skipping habit.

Pull whole paragraphs

Inference skills are improved by requiring answers which are not obvious and live between the lines; however, whole paragraphs must be pulled out so the children who have this problem can see, step by step, how we arrived at the answers and opinions. This is done to emphasize the importance of reading many details to come to a conclusion. An added benefit is that children who do not have this weakness share their own thinking—and their quick insights are amazing. It is difficult for them to break the process down so we can see how they got there. Inadvertently, skillful children receive metacognitive lessons in their own thinking, while providing examples to other children who still have difficulty with such subtleties.

Great literature, to me, has always been sacrosanct. Pulling it apart for skills practice invariably has been forbidden in my mind. These ideas are suggested with a cautious approach. Use sparingly and choose wisely. But do use examples from the book itself as a kick off for other practice materials. Children seem to accept evidence for error with greater belief if it comes from the exact source.

On Fridays, we read anything, in any way, with no rules, no focus. And of course, I am a contented teacher when a child comes to me—especially on Friday—to say, "Mrs. Wiener, Mrs. Wiener, 'digress' is in my book, and I knew what it meant!" I also have hope for new habits when one of the youngest says, "Mrs. Wiener, I'm reading between the lines." ■

ELAINE WIENER teaches a combination 1–3, self-contained GATE class at Allen Elementary School in the Garden Grove Unified School District.

The Gift of Poetry

Julia Candace Corliss

Poetry, Poetry is her name
When she enters your life
it will never be the same.
She flies
around the world
looking for places to reside
looking for ones to bestow her gift upon.
She seeks out the hearts of those
who fear not to risk their all
and answer her clarion call
those who will soar with their imaginations
and fling their spirits into the center
of life
and learn
about her precious gift
as they strive
to read and write.

With Poetry you must be ready
for all the multitudinous word choices
she presents
with her images sometimes fleeting
other times bold.
With Poetry you must be ready
for her comings and goings
and her demand for discipline
perseverance
and unswerving belief in your inner song.

Then, one day
she breathes her gift into you
and carries you
to that wondrous place in the light
where your now poetic inner sight
brings other poet-souls into heart view
and together
you spread your wings
touch minds
and take flight.

Away you wing into vast word skies
capturing feelings and thoughts
frozen in time with rhythm
and sometimes rhyme.
Images and beats that repeat
resound in your soul
and you know that come what may
life will never, ever be the same
as it was before she came.
Yes, Poetry is her name.

This poem is dedicated to all teachers who bring the gift of poetry into their classrooms.

The Gift of Poetry in the Classroom

BY JULIA CANDACE CORLISS

The classroom language arts/English curriculum must include poetry in order to encompass the full range of the potential of language for human expression. Howard Gardner writes of poetry as being linguistic intelligence exemplified. In his discussion of linguistic intelligence, he notes that semantic, phonological, and syntactical aspects of language are of prime importance to the poet. "In the poet, then, one sees at work with special clarity the core operations of language: 1) sensitivity to word meanings, 2) sensitivity to word order-grammar, rules, syntax, 3) sensitivity to sound, rhythm, inflection, and meter, and 4) sensitivity to different functions of language—to excite, convince, stimulate, convey information, or please" (Gardner, 1983). The poet, then is possessed of an intelligence which connects him to the highest potential with respect to the use of language. Gardner describes how the young poet reads published poets, imitates their voices, attends to language, loves language, and through practice, ultimately finds her own voice while attaining great fluency with language. From this perspective, immersion in poetry has the potential to nurture the growth of linguistic intelligence, and it is this potential which earns poetry its rightful place in the elementary classroom's language arts/English curriculum designed to help gifted students realize their greatest potential as writers and readers.

Poetry as a Vehicle

In my own teaching experience, I have found poetry to be a vehicle for children to live through experiences with reading and writing. Poetry uses images created with words to communicate with the reader or listener (Livingston, 1990; Heard, 1989; Denman, 1988; Packard, 1992; Paz, 1973; Oakeshott, 1959; Gallagher, 1982). A poet arranges images considering how they will appear together. That which distinguishes one poet from another "lies in the character of the images he is apt to delight in and in the manner in which he is disposed to arrange them" (Oakeshott, 1959). The poetic image contradicts rational, scientific laws (Paz, 1973) and opens up another way of seeing. It is this ability of poetry to open up another way of seeing that makes it especially valuable in working with gifted students. Poetry invites developing writers to view the world in new ways. "It presents fresh perspectives on life and upends stereotyped ways of thinking" (Cullinan, Scala, and Schroeder, 1995). Thus, poetry is a powerful medium which enhances students' facility with language.

The writing of poetry begins with the reading of poetry and the teacher's role is to ignite the love of language by bringing her or his own joy of language to students through reading poetry aloud and performing poetry in the classroom. For instance, when students hear a poem read aloud or see the teacher act out a poem, the language embedded within that poem becomes part of their vocabulary and they are then able to draw upon that language in speaking, reading, and writing (Cullinan, Scala, and Schroeder, 1995).

Building Student Self-Confidence as Writers

In working with gifted students who are developing as writers, I have found that poetry releases

them from the concern students often have about length and about finishing; since poetry pieces are generally much shorter than stories or essays, they can therefore be finished more easily. Students can even do several drafts of a poem without feeling multiple drafts as a burden. There is a rewarding sense of accomplishment for writers who see a growing pile of finished pieces. It is possible to have that happen sooner with poetry than with prose. This factor helps build students' self-confidence as writers. By reading, writing, talking about, playing with, and performing poetry, students explore the sounds and rhythms of language, increase their vocabularies, and are exposed to multiple layers of meaning through the interplay of feelings, language, and images.

It is important to immerse students in the richness of language available through poetry. I read poems aloud to my students... poems that move me, that open up new vision and insight for me. I invite my students to seek out and bring back to class poems that do the same for them, and to share them with me and their classmates. I cultivate my own joy by continually seeking out new poems that touch me, and I bring that joy to my students, because I too believe that "the reading and writing of poetry must begin with the joy of it." (Heard, 1989) Below are ten suggestions for immersing yourself and your students in the joy of poetry throughout the year and thereby making poetry a living presence in your classroom.

Ten Suggestions for Poetry Immersion

1. Begin and end the day with a poem that you read aloud. Invite students to respond by simply saying: "What did you make of that poem?" Or, do not invite response. Let the poem linger in the air for a

See POETRY, 39

STARTING YOUR POETRY SHELF

Children's Poetry Books

Recommended by Julia Candace Corliss

Altman, Susan and Lechner, Susan, Eds. (1993). ***Followers of the north star: rhymes about African American heroes, heroines, and historical times.*** Illustrated by Byron Wooden. Chicago: Children's Press, Inc.

Bagert, Brod. (1995). ***Elephant games and other playful poems to perform.*** Illustrated by Tim Ellis. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press, Inc.

Begay, Shonto. (1995). ***Navajo visions and voices across the mesa.*** New York: Scholastic Inc.

Bryan, Ashley. (1992). ***Sing to the sun.*** New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Carlson, Lori M., Ed. (1994). ***Cool salsa: Bilingual poems on growing up Latino in the United States.*** New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Cook, Roy J. (Ed.) (1958). ***One hundred and one famous poems,*** Rev. Ed. Chicago: Contemporary Books, Inc.

Cumpian, Carlos. (1994). ***Latino rainbow.*** Illustrated by Richard Leonard. Chicago: Children's Press, Inc.

Feelings, Tom. (1993). ***Soul look back in wonder.*** New York: Dial Books.

Goldstein, Bobbye S. (Ed.). (1992). ***Inner chimes: Poems on poetry.*** Illustrated by Jane Breskin Zalben. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mill Press, Inc.

Hughes, Langston. (1994). ***The dream keeper and other poems.*** Illustrated by Brian Pinkney. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Koch, Kenneth and Farrell, Kate. (Eds.) (1985). ***Talking to the sun: An illustrated anthology of poems for young people.*** New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art Department of Special Publications.

Larrick, Nancy. (Ed.) (1991). ***To the moon and back: A collection of poems.*** Illustrated by Catharine O'Neill. New York: Delacorte Press.

McCullough, Frances. (Ed.) (1971, 1989). ***Earth, air, fire & water,*** Rev. Ed. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. (1995). ***The tree is older than you are: A bilingual gathering of poems & stories from Mexico with paintings by Mexican artists.*** New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, an Imprint of Simon &Schuster Children's Division.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. (Ed.) (1992). ***This same sky: A collection of poems from around the world.*** New York: Four Winds Press.

Panzer, Nora (Ed.) (1994). ***Celebrate America in poetry and art.*** New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Prelutsky, Jack. (Ed.) (1983).***The Random House book of poetry for children.*** Illustrated by Arnold Lobel. New York: Random House.

Soto, Gary. (1992). ***Neighborhood odes,*** illustrated by David Diaz. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Sullivan, Charles. (Ed.) (1991). ***Children of promise: African-American literature and art for young people.*** New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers.

Sullivan, Charles. (Ed.) (1994). ***Here is my kingdom: Hispanic-American literature and art for young people.*** New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers.

Turcotte, Mark. (1995). ***Songs of our ancestors: Poems about Native Americans.*** Illustrated by Kathleen S. Presnell. Chicago: Children's Press, Inc.

Wong, Janet S. (1994). ***Good luck gold and other poems.*** New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books.

Wood, Nancy. (1993). ***Spirit walker.*** Illustrated by Frank Howell. New York: Delacorte Press (A Doubleday Book for Young Readers).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Engaging Students in Reading

BY PEGGY BUZANSKI

Some of my fondest memories involve reading books. Reading transports me to unknown places and times, escaping the routine of everyday life; I have always thought of books as friends. I am told that I was reading by age 4, and when I went to kindergarten, I managed to make trouble because all I wanted to do was read and talk. All the teacher wanted me to do was repeat the letter names. But how do you entice someone to find joy in reading when they have not experienced the delight of a good book?

There are countless ways for students to dig deeply and think complexly while reading. In my GATE classroom, we use a variety of texts, reading and analyzing nonfiction as well as fiction. The following strategies are ones that I have used successfully to entice reluctant readers into the world of books. They are based on the principles of curriculum differentiation, Gardner's multiple intelligences, and Kohlberg's stages of moral development.

Gifted children need to look at a text from different points of view. While reading *Patty Reed's Doll, The Story of the Donner Party*, by Rachel K. Laurgaard, children are assigned different roles based on characters in the book and Kohlberg's stages of moral development.

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a theory that people go through certain stages in their approach to morality and responsible behavior to themselves and others. I teach my students Kohlberg's stages of moral development which include:

Stage Zero—pleasure vs pain
Stage One—obedience vs punishment
Stage Two—"eye for an eye"
Stage Three—nice girl/good boy
State Four—law and order
Stage Five—social contracts
Stage Six—ethical principles

After reading and examining the text, students write scripts in order to perform skits demonstrating the stages of Kohlberg's moral development. They challenge the audience to identify the character and the level of moral development being portrayed. This activity exercises many of the intelligences. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is used when children are actively participating in any kind of dramatics. The linguistic intelligence is engaged while writing scripts. The intrapersonal intelligence examines the text through the eyes of the character in the book. Students then reflect on their own development according to Kohlberg's theory.

"Gifted students need to look at a text from different points of view."

One scene in the book readily lends itself to this lesson. An altercation is described in which a teamster from the Grave's family is taking his oxen over a particularly difficult part of the trail. The teamster's oxen become entangled with the Reed's oxen. Mr. Grave's teamster whips the animal and when Mrs. Reed tries to stop him, she is hit with the whip. Angered by the whipping, Patty Reed's father begins a fight and the teamster is stabbed in the shoulder. Ultimately, he dies. The members of the wagon train decide to banish Mr. Reed and send him out into the wilderness without a rifle or food. This provides a perfect opportunity to assign roles and levels of response based on Kohlberg's theory of moral development.

Another way to engage student readers is through painting. Authors weave a tapestry of words which lends itself to graphic representations. Accessing spatial intelligence gives the reader the opportunity to take the written word and transform it into a painting. Every text provides this opportunity, but one of my favorites is the opening to *Island of the Blue Dolphin*, by Scott O'Dell. O'Dell writes:

> *Our island is two leagues long and one league wide, and if you were standing on one of the hills that rise in the middle of it, you would think that it looked like a fish. Like a dolphin lying on its side, with its tail pointing toward the sunrise, its nose pointing to the sunset, and its fins making reefs and the rocky ledges along the shore.*

Scott O'Dell goes on to give descriptions of the island which the reader can readily visualize as a picture. The reader examines all the information and words and uses watercolors to create a painting depicting the island. The watercolors create the effect of a shimmering sea surrounding the island. Watercolors also have the advantage of blending well, and do not require as much precision as other media.

Every author develops a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

See ENGAGE STUDENTS, 19

The sequencing of events involves the logical-mathematical intelligence while reading; however, the passage of time is often a difficult concept for young readers. Assisting students to create timelines enables them to organize the events in an order necessary to analyze the text. In the book, *By the Great Horn Spoon!*, by Sid Fleishman, the trip from San Francisco via Sacramento and then to Hangtown in the gold fields, provides students with an opportunity to create a story map based on the author's words and sequencing of events.

"Grand Conversations" is an activity that provides an excellent way to engage the interpersonal intelligence. This works well with any type of text. The only prerequisite is that you read the material ahead of time and create a series of five or six challenging, open-ended questions. The groups discuss the answers to the questions in a conversational setting. The more provocative the text or questions, the more animated the discussions become.

Who Really Killed Cock Robin, by Jean Craighead George, offers another opportunity for children to see different points of view. Students are divided into specialist teams and read the book from an assigned viewpoint while keeping a journal. The assigned roles are: environmentalist, politician, biologist, newspaper reporter, and kid in the community. By examining the mystery from all these viewpoints, students are then invited to think like a specialist and look at the book with those "eyes." At the end of the week, we have panel discussions. The students write questions from their assigned perspectives, and then meet in their expert groups to discuss their notebooks and to prepare for panel discussions.

The possibilities are never ending. These are a few ways to to entice reluctant readers to become engaged and discover the wonderful world of books. ■

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Armstrong, T. (1993). *7 kinds of smart: Discovering and using your natural intelligences.* New York: Plume, Penguin Group

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Kohlberg, L. (1981). *The philosophy of moral development, Vol. 1.* San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Lazear, D. (1994). *Multiple intelligences approaches to assessment: Solving the assessment conundrum.* Tucson: Zephyr Press.

Student Books

Fleischman, S. (1988). *By the great horn spoon!* Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

George, J.C. (1991). *Who really killed cock robin? An ecological mystery.* New York: HarperCollins of America.

Laurgaard, R. (1981). *Patty Reed's doll:* The story of the Donner Party. Provo, UT: McCurdy Historical Doll Museum.

O'Dell, S. (1960). *Island of the blue dolphins.* New York: Dell Publishing.

PEGGY BUZANSKI is a fourth-grade GATE magnet teacher at Marguerite Hahn Elementary School in Cotati-Rohnert Park USD. She is also a district mentor teacher in reading, and was named the CAG Redwood Regional Teacher of the Year in 1998. She can be reached at buzanski@sonic.net

Gifted Readers and Reading Instruction

BY DAVID LEVANDE

Children who have exceptional ability in reading and working with text information are considered gifted readers (Mason & Au, 1990). Gifted readers read voraciously, perform well above their grade levels, possess advanced vocabularies and do well on tests (Vacca, Vacca & Gove, 1991). They usually have advanced language abilities in comparison with children of the same age. They use words easily, accurately, and creatively in new and innovative contexts and speak in semantically complex and syntactically complicated sentences (Bond & Bond, 1983).

Their cognitive ability mirrors their language ability and therefore, the cognitive abilities of gifted readers vary from the norm. Those gifted in reading have a unique ability to perceive relationships, solve problems, demonstrate observational skills, and to grasp abstract ideas quickly (Witty, 1971).

Cognitive needs of gifted children

Clark (1983) outlined cognitive needs that differentiated gifted children from others:

- To be exposed to new and challenging information about the environment and the culture.
- To be exposed to varied subjects and concerns.

- To be allowed to pursue ideas as far as their interests take them.
- To encounter and use increasingly difficult vocabulary and concepts.
- To be exposed to ideas at rates appropriate to the individual's pace of learning.
- To pursue inquiries beyond allotted time spans.

Many children later identified as gifted enter school knowing how to read. Approximately half of the children classified as gifted by intelligence tests could read in kindergarten, and nearly all of them could read at the beginning of first grade (Burns & Broman, 1983). Their reading abilities develop naturally, without formal instruction, in home environments where literacy is valued and language usage is encouraged (Durkin, 1966). They have been immersed in a print-rich environment and have "puzzled-out" for themselves how to read (Teale, 1982).

"The greater the ability in reading, the greater the need for a special program commensurate with that ability"

Gifted readers are so advanced that they have little to gain from the reading materials and activities normally given to others of their age and grade. They require far less drill and practice than their peers (Witty, 1985). Gifted readers have special needs just as other exceptional learners do. The greater the ability in reading, the greater the need for a special program commensurate with that ability (Hoskisson & Tompkins, 1987; Wallen, 1974). Gifted readers benefit from special programs and may be penalized if not provided with special attention to help achieve full potential (Tuttle, 1987). In short, they need the same diagnostically based instruction that should be afforded to all learners (Bond & Bond, 1983; Carr, 1984; Rupley, 1984).

Features of programs for gifted readers

A major concern of teachers of reading is providing quality differentiated instruction for the highly able readers in their classrooms. A logical means for providing such instruction is ability grouping. Gifted readers should be grouped together so they can feel safe in verbalizing and sharing their insights (Sakiey, 1980). Students grouped by ability for reading instruction were found to have increased understanding and appreciation of literature.

Guidelines for working with gifted students

Researchers, (Bartelo & Cornette, 1982; Bagaj, 1968; Cornette & Bartelo, 1982; and Sakiey, 1980) have presented some general guidelines for working with gifted students:

- Instruction in basic word attitude skills should be kept to a minimum
- Challenging materials should be made available, especially to young gifted readers
- Instruction should facilitate critical and creative reading
- Use of analogies should be studied, especially in classes for older gifted students
- Inductive, rather than deductive instruction should be provided
- Flexibility in assignments should be provided
- Unnecessary repetition in instructions should be eliminated
- Students' divergent and diversified interests should be nurtured
- Independent projects such as sociograms, time machine models, newscasts, games based on story themes and simulation role-playing activities should be encouraged

Shaughnessy (1994) recommended expanded literacy activities for the gifted. Guest speakers in the classroom, creative writing and connecting books with television or movies are examples of recommended activities.

Four general options are available to meet the needs of gifted students: (a) special classes or schools for the gifted, (b) accelerated programs (skipping grades), (c) mainstreaming gifted students in regular classrooms, and (d) enrichment programs for mainstreamed gifted students (Schwartz, 1984).

Acceleration and individual enrichment

Two avenues available to meet the needs of gifted readers in the classroom are reading acceleration and individual enrichment (Johnson, 1987). Reading acceleration involves placing students on their instructional level in reading without regard to grade placement. Enrichment involves delving deeper into reading material at the student's grade level.

Reading programs for the gifted should take into account the individual characteristics of the children, capitalize on the gifts they possess, and expand and challenge their abilities. Tasks should be commensurate with ability and achievement.

Renzulli (1988) recommends that activities for the gifted emphasize higher level thinking skills, controversial issues, and less structured teaching strategies. Polette (1984) suggested heavy emphasis on the following factors: higher cognitive levels of thinking, critical reading, vocabulary development, wide exposure to literature, productive thinking,

See GIFTED READERS, 41

Aaarrrgh! Another Book Report!

Tired of writing book reports? There are lots of different ways you can "report" on a book you've read. We have given you three suggestions for a different kind of report.

But we'd like to hear about interesting and unusual book reports you have made. Tell us the general theme or style of your "report" and list the steps another student should follow to do something similar.

We'll choose the best to publish in the summer issue of the *Communicator.* If your entry is chosen, you'll receive a $25 gift certificate from Barnes & Noble bookstore.

Make sure you include the entry form on page 22 with your submission.

Any Book, Story, or Poem

SCRIPTWRITER

Write a script for a scene in a book you have read. Follow the format below.

- Brief description of setting
- Names of characters and a brief description of each
- Dialogue
- Stage Directions (Remember you must tell your actors and actresses how to say the words, how and where to move, and what to do with any props they must handle during the scene. These directions are usually written in parentheses.)

*If you really like your script, act it out with your friends for the class.

Fantasy or Science Fiction Book or Story

SCI-FI EDITOR or FANTASY EDITOR

Divide a chart into three sections: Realistic, Nonrealistic, and Combination.

List events, people, and items from your story that fit into each category.

Draw conclusions, and cite the evidence for them, as to whether the book should be called Realistic, Nonrealistic, or a Combination of both.

Any Book, Story, or Poem

WINDOW DRESSER

Ask your teacher for bulletin board space. Create a store window for a book, story, or poem you have read. Include some of the following:

- a background to match the main setting
- cut-outs or models of the main characters
- quotes from the story or your own statements to invite others to read the story
- questions about the story
- a brief review with your recommendations
- real objects related to the story

Student CHALLENGE Center

Here's a new regular feature for kids—the Student Challenge Center! We'll challenge you to solve problems, create new mind puzzlers, or present evidence to prove something in an original and clever way. For each challenge, we'll select one or more submissions to publish in a future issue. And, if your entry is selected, you'll also receive a gift certificate from Barnes & Noble bookstores.

Name

Age Grade

Address

City State Zip

Teacher's name

Name of School

School District

I certify that the submission is original and created by the student.

Student signature

Parent signature

Send all submissions with an entry form to:

Debra Johnson
Associate Editor for Youth
3425 Santa Cruz Drive
Riverside, CA 92507
E-mail: DebJoAnn@aol.com

Entries for challenges from this issue (winter 1999) must be received no later than April 20, 1999 to be considered for publication.

Dr. B's Side Bar Science

Remember Dr. B? He's our science wizard who'll be presenting you with interesting facts and challenging questions. Did you figure out the last challenge about El Niño, El Fuego, and La Niña (Check page 26 of the fall 1998 issue)? Well, here's another challenge to your brain.

Why is it that when you blow on a candle, the flame goes out, but when you blow on embers they burst up in flame?

Make sure your response is complete and to the point, but be creative as well! Don't forget to include an entry form with your submissions.

Barnes & Noble

We are proud to announce that we have a sponsor for our Student Challenge Center. The Barnes & Noble Bookstore office in Encino, California will provide $25 gift certificates to students whose entries are chosen for publication.

THANK YOU BARNES & NOBLE!

"TO READ OR NOT TO READ— THAT IS THE CHALLENGE"

Watching the video of a favorite book can be very enjoyable; the characters we've become familiar with are given faces to go along with their personalities, and the setting of the story becomes more real and alive. The presentation of the plot on video helps us to develop a better understanding of the story's message.

However, students are often tempted to just watch the video or to listen to an audio tape rather than to read the printed page.

Your challenge is to write an essay entitled "To Read or Not to Read—That is the Challenge." The purpose of your essay is to persuade someone who doesn't like reading to read a book instead of viewing it on video or listening to it on an audiotape. Your essay should explore the benefits and drawbacks of reading books compared to watching videos or listening to audiotapes.

Students whose essays are selected for publication will receive a $25 gift certificate from Barnes & Noble bookstores.

Photography Contest

Prove the Existence of Air

Air is an essential element sustaining life and yet, we can't "see" it. How might you prove the existence of air visually? What tell-tale signs illustrate that air, though invisible, is a reality? What effects of air can you see in the world around you?

Get your camera out and start looking for a great shot that proves air exists.

Each entry should include:

1. Jumbo size (3 x 5) color or black and white print photograph (no slides or negatives accepted)
2. Written summary explaining how the photograph provides evidence of the existence of air

Only two (2) photographs per entry and one entry per person will be accepted.

Look familiar?

We published this challenge in the fall issue, and realized afterward that we had not given you enough time to prepare your entries.

But it's such a good one that we're running it again. In fact, the deadline for all the fall challenges has been extended to April 20, 1999.

So, get out your camera and liven up your thinking. We'd like to see what you can do!

Book Review

ELLA ENCHANTED

By Gail Carson Levine
(1997) Harper
paperback, $4.95, hardback, $14.95, 232 pp.
ISBN 0064407055

REVIEWED BY NATALIE COHEN

Ella Enchanted is a Cinderella story by Gail Carson Levine. Ella of Frell struggles throughout the story against a spell put on her by a fairy, Lucinda. When Ella was born, Lucinda proclaimed that Ella would always be obedient. When Lucinda made Ella obedient, her intentions were good. She just didn't consider the drawbacks.

Ella never really had a close relationship with her father, Sir Peter, before her mother's death; but after Ella's mother died, her father became more and more hostile. Unlike the classic Cinderella, Ella's father never dies. Dame Olga, the "stepmother" isn't mean to Ella at all. However, Ella's father decides to send Ella off to finishing school to learn etiquette along with Dame Olga's two daughters, Hattie and Olive. Hattie is the worst one, caring only about herself, and acts condescending to Ella all the time. Her younger sister Olive isn't much better, only caring about money. When Ella gets to finishing school, things get worse. She only has one friend, Areida of Ayortha, and the Writing Mistress is the only teacher that she doesn't despise. In addition, Hattie learns of Ella's obedience and begins ordering her around. However, many times Ella finds a loophole and humorously tricks Hattie. But when Hattie orders Ella to stop being friends with Areida, Ella runs away.

Sir Peter and Ella have many servants. Ella's favorite servant is Mandy. Mandy gave Ella a book of fairy tales as something to read while at finishing school. Ella finds letters and fairy tales in the book, and every time she opens it there is something different. It is there that Ella finds a letter from Dame Olga to Hattie and learns that Hattie wears a wig! When Ella runs away, she takes Hattie's wig with her!

This is a humorous, yet touching book about growing up and being strong. Ella, unlike Cinderella, doesn't wait for Prince Charming to come rescue her. This story has a little more of a twist than Cinderella, but I have only told you a little bit of the story. If I were you, I'd read the whole thing.

NATALIE COHEN is 9-years-old and in the 6th grade at Rolling Hills Preparatory School.

WHAT IS POETRY?

What is Poetry?
Poetry is all writing
It is as smooth as a rock that has
been
In the ocean for many, many years.

What is Poetry?
Poetry is as beautiful as a red
rose
In the middle of a green, grassy
field
On a hot and sunny day.

What is Poetry?
Poetry smells like a home baked
Chocolate cookie that has
A very sweet aroma.

What is Poetry?
Poetry sounds like a choir in perfect
harmony
Poetry sounds like the joyful
Melody of the wind on a fall day
Poetry is a magnificent rainbow on
a blue sky.
What is Poetry?
It's the ball of energy
Inside me that lets
Me express myself.

Jason Sorger, Age 10
Mirman School, Los Angeles

The Forgotten Books

Getting Gifted High School Students to Read and Understand the Classics

BY BRIAN CROSBY

When assigning independent reading to gifted students, do you observe them selecting *Little Women* or *Walden*? While a few may, most do not choose the old, thick books with tiny print.

The bulk of classic literature overflows with modifiers and clauses. With less than half the book in dialogue format, most students—including gifted ones—easily lose concentration; they choose instead to read books with more modern, minimal writing styles, heavy on conversation and light on description.

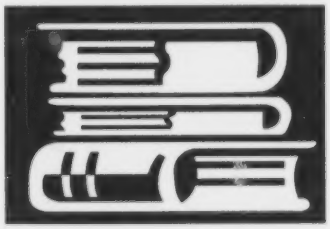
While students shouldn't be force-fed the classics, offering quick synopses of them available in reference books such as *Outstanding Books for the College Bound*, published by Young Adult Library Services Association, can jump-start a child's interest.

Teachers already losing instructional days to more required testing may not want to make room in the curriculum for *Ethan Frome*, most likely collecting dust on the top shelf in the book room. After all, where does a teacher find the time?

By focusing on just one particular author over a carefully planned two-week period, teachers can reveal to their students the new old books.

My sophomore English honors students study Charles Dickens in the following fashion. First, they all research Dickens using the Internet or the library, bringing in at least 30 "fast facts" about him (other than his birthdate and the number of his children). The following day we simply go around the room, up and down the rows, with each student mentioning one thing about Dickens which had not been previously mentioned.

The class is divided into thirds and each group chooses which Dickens novel it wishes to read. Teachers may provide a one-page overview though I prefer letting



the advanced students put this together themselves, instructing them to read the first couple of pages before deciding if they like a book. They write their chosen titles on pieces of paper which are collected; we then vote to determine the top three Dicken selections. Invariably the three groups end up being disproportionate which serves as an excellent lesson for the smallest group in sticking to a minority or less popular view, and not feeling intimidated to join the larger ones.

They are to read the book as homework; after about 10 days they discuss it in class. I offer them some guidelines including character analysis and thematic material, as I sit in their groups to try to keep them focused. They receive between 2 and 3 hours of in-class time for their discussions over the course of 5 to 6 days; this allows slower readers to feel less overwhelmed about reading a complete Dickens book in a short time span.

All group members take their own notes. Students are encouraged to write directly in their books if they have their own copies, and are given three extra credit points for doing so. Each group chooses a representative to present the most pertinent points of its novel to the rest of the class. Everyone listens carefully, takes notes, and begins to discover connections between the three books, noting the similarities that make the books Dickensian.

In addition to the usual expository essay, students can be given a brief comprehension test to assess their understanding of the book. With the recent introduction of the Stanford 9 test in California, I have begun to incorporate Stanford 9-like comprehension questions on tests. (See box on page 26 for an example of questions for the Dickens unit.)

Since comprehension is the most difficult thing for any student reading a classic novel, creating these questions, though time-consuming, can be tremendously beneficial for students to gain experience in close analysis of great literature. Because the A.P. test demands a certain knowledge of classics and analysis, it behooves today's language art instructors to strengthen gifted students' exposure to such books which many would not read on their own.

In addition to the Dickens unit, I make agreements with my students that for every Dean Koontz or Danielle Steele selection in their

SAMPLE COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS FOR DICKENS UNIT

Read the following passage from *A Tale of Two Cities* and choose the best possible answer.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had every thing before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way, in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

1. "Epoch" can be best described as:
   a. age
   b. time
   c. place

2. Which of these would best help you understand this story?
   a. the history of the time
   b. the characters of this time
   c. the author of this piece

[answers: 1) a, 2) a]

independent reading list, they must read a classic.

In addition to the teacher's encouragement, the responsibility of motivating students to do more reading of the classics can be shared by parents who can read aloud a passage from one of the books, asking their child to explain it. This turns into both an enjoyable activity as well as an instructive one to the parent, who has probably read some of the books at an earlier time. English teachers have already found that repeated readings can provide new insights into great literature.

Through a reexamination of the oldies but goodies, teachers can more effectively prepare their gifted students with the tools to unlock the density of the older literature. ■

BRIAN CROSBY teaches advanced English classes at Hoover High School in Glendale Unified School District.

Reading Logs

BY BETTE GOULD

The "Reading Log" sheet is designed for individual children to keep track of their independent reading experiences. Asking children to note the type, or genre, of the book read allows the students, teachers, or parents to track interests. Teachers and parents may then introduce children to a particular author within a favored genre; or they may encourage children to sample a variety of genres which may not have been previously encountered.

Often young readers are pleasantly surprised upon reading their first play, poetry book, or autobiography. Other times, readers need the luxury to dwell within a particular type of reading until feeling satisfied and ready to move on to another. This record sheet provides the information needed by adults and children to propose or determine "what's next."

The column for noting whether or not the reading was shared, and if shared, the method for sharing, is useful as it asks readers to consider including others in the reading process.

The rating stars encourage readers to reflect upon what was read, and it is useful in recommending works to others. The first rating is done immediately after reading a given book. The second rating is made when the log is complete and after comparing all entries. The two ratings may be quite different.

For families, completed log sheets can be saved along with other school or recreational records of a given year or time period. Children will love to look back later and see how their reading tastes and experiences have changed.

Teachers might decide that their advanced readers need a change from the standard book report and substitute this log sheet for one of the reports required during the school period, indicating that sampling a variety of reading genres is a worthy goal of independent reading. The message of such a log is that we don't necessarily need to share or report on everything we read, but that it is nice to have a record of our reading interests, progress, and responses to different types of written matter. ■

(See Reading Log, page 27)

BETTE GOULD is an educational consultant and writer in Chatsworth, CA.

Reading Log

page

Title/Author/Illustrator	Start Date	Finish Date	Type	Shared? How?	Initial Rating	Final Rating
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Type

A	Adventure
AB	Autobiography
B	Biography
CL	Classic
C	Contemporary
F	Fiction
FL	Folklore
HS	Historic
H	Humor
MG	Magazine Article
M	Mystery
NW	Newspaper
NF	Non-fiction
N	Novel
PL	Play
P	Poetry
PB	Picture Book
SF	Science Fiction
SS	Short Story

Rating

★ I didn't enjoy it; you can skip this one.

★★ So-so.

★★★ Good. Try it, you might like it.

★★★★ Very good. I liked it a lot.

★★★★★ Terrific book, highly recommend to all.

Adapted from *The Teacher's Book of Lists*, S. Madsen & B. Gould. (1994). Glenview, IL: GoodYear Books, A Division of Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Curriculum to Promote Advanced Reading

Skill Development

The relationship between the dimensions of depth and complexity and the skills of reading were identified as a strategy to develop advanced reading abilities. A major purpose underlying this relationship was to illustrate to teachers and students that the study of the dimensions of depth and complexity are aligned with the skills of all disciplines—including the skills of reading.

Skills of Stanford 9	Dimensions of Depth/Complexity
Use of figurative language	Language of the disciplines
Define specific facts	Details
Identify relations of events in a story	Patterns
Sequence	Over time
Infer, predict, formulate questions	Unanswered questions
Provide reasons why, determine cause/effect	Rules
Note multiple meanings	Points of view

Reading Mats

Developed to promote high-end or sophisticated reading strategies for gifted and advanced readers, Reading Mats provide a format for teacher-directed or individualized reading. The major objectives to be accomplished from using the Reading Mats include 1) development of an awareness of genre not typically used in the teaching of reading, 2) identification of connections between many and varied genre, 3) generalizability of the skills of reading and the dimensions of depth and complexity to all forms of genre, and 4) importance of many and varied genre to learning and understanding information in-depth. Students use the Reading Mats to guide their reading and understanding of many and varied genre. All mats share a common design: introduction and use of a genre, questions to stimulate the relationships between the genre and the skills of reading comprehension and the dimensions of depth and complexity.

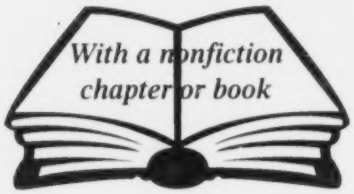
The development of Reading Mats was supported by EMMA RODRIGUEZ, Roosevelt Cluster leader, Los Angeles Unified School District, drawn by VICTORIA SIEGEL, Administrative Assistant, Roosevelt Cluster, and designed by SANDRA KAPLAN.

Reading Mat

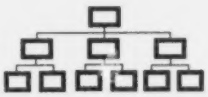
1. What big idea connects these two types of reading materials?

2. How is the language of the disciplines the same or different in these reading materials?

Reading Mat

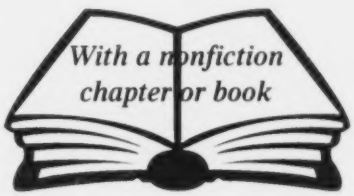


1. What details describe these reading materials?

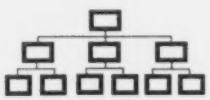
2. What  rules are used in each reading selection?

3. What trends make these reading materials important and usable?

Reading Mat



1. What details distinguish each type of reading material?

2. What  rules and patterns are the same between these types of reading materials?

SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE BOOKS: GUIDING GIFTED READERS FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO HIGH SCHOOL

by Judith Wynn Halsted

(1994) Gifted Psychology Press, paperback, $22.00, 430 pp.
ISBN 0-910-707-24-3

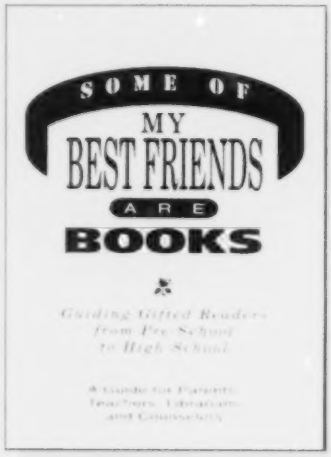
REVIEWED BY VIRGINIA McQUEEN

The title of this interesting and valuable book stems from an incident wherein a young mother, worried that her gifted child was spending too much time reading by himself, admonished him to go outside and play with his friends. "But Mom," he replied, "some of my best friends are books." And therein lies the tale.

If you have ever had questions about the role of all types of books in a child's development, this is the book for you. Described as a guide for parents, teachers, librarians and counselors, it answers questions, defines education terminology, and provides information to guide anyone who interacts with gifted children relating to the choice and use of books. The author has broad experience as a teacher, librarian, counselor, and parent and uses her experience to present practical uses for books to meet the emotional and intellectual needs of children with high ability. She writes in an easy-to-read style that leads the reader through opening anecdotes, definition of terms, rationale for use of strategies to guide readers, and suggestions for when to use each strategy. The three parts of the book are each followed by a reference list

The preface includes some startling statistics which make a compelling case for reading the book. It states that in 1992, as many as 35% of families in the United States did not purchase a single book during the entire year. The second sentence says, "Ten percent of the people read 80% of the books read each year." The challenge is for you to ensure that the gifted children under your jurisdiction are among that ten percent.

Part One of the book discusses the social and emotional needs of the gifted student. The author labels the chapters, "The Heart of the Child," and, "The Mind of the Child," and she describes the special developmental needs of gifted children. There are many anecdotes to illustrate the well-researched information about gifted learners with references to specific age-appropriate titles.



Part Two, labeled by the author as, "The Process," begins with descriptions of what to expect in readers from a beginning reader through the high school level. Types of readers are discussed with easy to use suggestions for teachers and parents in assisting the reluctant and the mature reader to enjoy reading and to use books to understand real-life situations. Bibliotherapy, "the use of selected reading material as therapeutic adjuvant in medicine and in psychiatry; also: guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading," (definition cited from *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*) is discussed as a way to assist gifted children with their unique set of emotional needs. Using language that everyone can easily understand, the section concludes with a discussion of current restructuring practices within the educational system with emphasis on how such practices affect the gifted student.

Part Three is entitled, "The Books." Specific titles are cited for use in specific situations, followed by a section which discusses different types of books with suggestions on how to use them to guide gifted children. The last section is an annotated bibliography categorized by age and grade of the child. The author has selected and defined fifteen characteristics of gifted children such as intensity, drive to understand, and sensitivity. Those characteristics are used in the annotated bibliography for use in selecting a particular book to fit a given situation. For instance, *Evan's Corner* by Elizabeth Starr Hill, New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1967, is suggested as a book for children in kindergarten through grade two with the characteristic of a "drive to understand." It was chosen to assist children who are not familiar with cities. The illustrations in the book reveal the details of life in the inner city for the young reader. The book *In the Time of the Bells*, by Maria Gripe, New York: Delacorte, 1965, is suggested for use with children in grades three through five who have the characteristic of "sensitivity" because the main character, Arvid, thinks that he is insensitive and does not like people. This section of Halsted's book is an excellent resource for selecting the right

book to guide a child to better understanding of self and situations.

The last part of this interesting book is a set of well-planned and easy-to-use indexes which cross reference books cited, authors, and situations for the best use.

Halsted, an educational consultant for Halsted Academic Advisors in Traverse City, Michigan, has made book selection for gifted children so much easier and sensible with this work. I only wish it had been available when I was a librarian and when my child was young. This book is definitely the best of its kind on the market today. It would make a valuable addition to the reference library of anyone who seeks to understand and serve gifted children. ■

VIRGINIA McQUEEN is Associate Editor for Curriculum and Technology. She is recently retired from a distinguished career with the San Jose Unified School District.

CAG's 1999 Pre-Conference offers two choices

Research Day

Research Day features Carol Tomlinson, University of Virginia, who will present research conducted by the National Research Center. You'll also be the first to learn the results of a new CAG-sponsored study about California's gifted programs and students.

CAG and The College Board Present Strategies for Secondary Educators

New this year, this pre-conference session focuses on strategies for teaching students at the secondary level. CAG and The College Board present methods for differentiation and developing critical thinking and communication skills.

Friday, March 5, 1999
9:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

READING: A WORKBOOK FOR AGES 4–6
by Susan Amerikaner with illustrations by Leesa Whitten
(1992) Lowell House, Juvenile Contemporary Books
paperback, $4.95, 96 pp.
ISBN 0–929923-83-9

ENRICHMENT READING—THE GIFTED CHILD (GRADE 6)
by Peggy Kaye
(1995) American Education Publishing
paperback, $4.95, 72 pp.
ISBN 1–56189-436-2

THE GIFTED READER HANDBOOK
by Anthony Fredericks
(1988) Scott, Foresman & Co.
paperback, $9.95, 84 pp.
ISBN 0–673-18754-3

This trio of activity books offers a variety of supplementary reading activities to develop and extend the skills of gifted readers.

Reading: A Workbook for Ages 4-6 is directed toward parents for use at home with their young children. The author specifies in the preface that the activities are designed to teach children "how to think, not how to find the right answer." Since some of the children will be nonreaders, considerable parent involvement is required. Skills emphasized in the book are deduction, understanding relationships, sequencing, making inferences, and creative thinking.

A number of the activities are similar to items found in nonverbal assessment instruments used to identify young gifted children. They could provide good practice for children to become familiar with this type of assessment. ■

The Gifted Reader Handbook: Grades 3-6 is intended for teachers and includes suggestions for different ways to the use the book, an organizational chart showing which skills are emphasized in the various activities, and perforated pages for easy tear out and reproduction.

The largest section contains a group of 24 worksheets which at first glance appear much like the ordinary and overused classroom ditto. But closer examination shows a difference. Each worksheet starts with a section that emphasizes two thinking skills designed to "reinforce and extend students' cognitive processes." The second part contains two creative extensions that support practice in elaboration, fluency, originality, or flexibility, and usually require resources found at home or in the library.

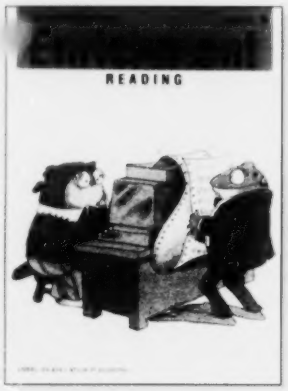
The remainder of the book is made up of a variety of activities, projects, and "story energizers." These activities also emphasize both thinking skills and creative extension skills. An answer key is provided. ■

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Enrichment Reading—The Gifted Child opens with a message to the child, inviting him or her to have fun at home with reading activities in the form of games, contests, puzzles, riddles, information, stories, and "all sorts of surprises."

The particular book reviewed was written for 6th graders and contained a great variety of activities. Some samples include practice with idioms in "Laugh Your Head Off," drawing conclusions with "Figure It Out," and creating vivid images with "Pictures in My Mind."

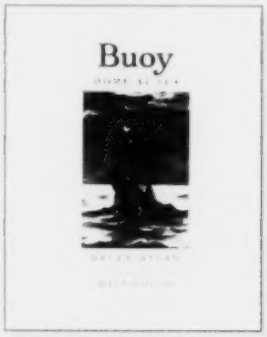
The book provides for both enrichment and parent involvement in the reading process. It includes an answer key and teaching suggestions for parents; different editions of the book are available for grades 1-6.



Sophisticated readers don't just happen. Young readers must be nurtured with a broad variety of opportunities that develop reading skills and understanding. These three books assist parents and teachers in providing such opportunities. ■

BUOY: HOME AT SEA
by Bruce Balan
Illustrated by Raúl Colón
(1998) Delcourte Press, hardcover, $14.95, 69 pp.
ISBN 0-385-32539-8

Childrens' author Bruce Balan readily admits that he writes books for children of all ages. His latest book, *Buoy: Home at Sea* is is a gem that will be enjoyed by readers from primary age to eighty and beyond.



Balan has a remarkable ability to tell a tale in the brief space of two or three short pages. Among the many tales within the book are those of a small family forced to ride out a storm with their disabled boat tied to Buoy's mooring ring, the antics of a group of crabs about to set forth to see the world in an egg carton, and the practice and performance of a concert created by Buoy and his pals, Seal and Gull.

There is a freshness about Balan's use of language that sometimes takes one's breath away, and leaves one remarking inwardly, "I never thought about it in that way before." He obviously takes delight in wordsmithing and there are many memorable lines for one to savor.

Buoy is all about the sea and the happenings of the sea—about the animals, the wind, the ships, and the sky. But it is also all about you and all about me. It is about how we are all connected to one another and how fragile is life and yet how enduring.

Buoy is a quick read and one that your child will ask to have read over and over again, and you will be glad for the opportunity to do so. ■

Hear Bruce Balan in person at the 1999 CAG conference in Santa Clara: he will be speaking Sunday morning, March 7.

CYBERSPACE JUNKIE

Eyes against screen,

Glass to glass in infinite reflection.

Nightly gazer of a virtual universe,

Astronomer of information,

Working, resting, and adventuring simultaneously,

Connected to every outlet in the real world.

Reaching further into the matrix,
Separate from all that is three-dimensional, solid.

Bursting in on electric pulses,

And fiber-optic beams of light,

Instantly anywhere,

And everywhere but home.

Mark Krel, Age 12
Mirman School, Los Angeles

ADVOCACY

Continued from 1

the factors contributing to the improvement of reading, but rather, our concern is the degree to which these factors support or align themselves with the needs, interests, and abilities of gifted students and advanced readers. Two important factors are class size reduction and the selection of new language arts texts and reading materials.

Class size reduction

Reduction in class size to 20 students for each teacher in the primary grades has been hailed by teachers and parents alike as a welcome relief for overworked teachers and a key to improved instruction for students. And indeed, smaller classes should allow for more individual attention to each student. However, if teachers do not alter or differentiate curriculum or academic expectations for the learners, gifted and advanced readers gain little from class size reduction. They are actually being short-changed in the class size reduction movement. The consequences of improving reading for some students should not place other students—those who can read well—at jeopardy.

Selection of new language arts texts and reading materials

Consider also the selection of new language arts texts and reading materials. This should be a wonderful opportunity to add new materials, some chosen specifically to support advanced readers. However, when we find teachers adhering strictly to the teacher's manual of newly adopted school reading series, and faithfully following the outline of lessons appropriate only for typical readers, advanced readers again suffer from neglect. Most gifted and advanced readers already know the skills presented in regular reading texts, and their rate of reading is faster than the manual's suggested allocation of time for the lesson. They usually become frustrated and lifeless in this context. When they are made to experience reading as it is outlined for the more typical reader, gifted and advanced readers are indirectly taught to become underachievers, never stretching themselves to meet new challenges.

Additional issues and concerns related to advocating on behalf of gifted and advanced readers include perceptions as readers, reading strategies, and reading choices.

Perceptions as readers

Students develop perceptions of themselves as readers as a result of interactions with the reading curriculum, instructional strategies, and other readers. An educational setting with an abundance of resources stressing simplistic vocabulary and fundamental skills leaves gifted and advanced readers without adequate referents to assess their own reading abilities. Interacting only with others who are having difficulty reading distorts perceptions of the self as a reader. If gifted students always perceive themselves as the best readers in class, their perceptions of self can be just as harmful as when poor readers perceive themselves as the most inferior readers in the group. Opportunities to perceive oneself relative to others who are equal to, better than, and less adept than we, are paramount to adequate self-efficacy. It is essential that gifted and advanced readers have consistent opportunities to assess themselves against models representative of the behaviors and reading choices of sophisticated readers if they are to progress rather than regress in their development as readers.

The current emphasis on raising the levels of reading proficiency for poor readers leaves insufficient models for gifted and advanced students to emulate and to measure their own reading behaviors. Accurate reading perceptions are dependent on providing students with the most expert practices commensurate to their functioning level; for gifted and advanced readers this includes models that exceed reading at age or grade levels. We must make available to gifted and advanced readers the benchmarks against which they can assess their reading progress and set their reading achievement goals.

Reading strategies

Strategies to accommodate the needs of advanced readers have ranged from those that demand more sophisticated reading material to those that require more sophisticated analysis of the material read. These strategies seem timeless and are certainly valuable for advanced readers. However, these strategies are not sufficient in the context of today's techniques and demands for teaching and learning reading. Just as the body of knowledge about how to teach reading and the materials available for students to read change, so must the definition and articulation of strategies that challenge the advanced readers.

It is incumbent on every teacher of reading to employ the instructional practices needed to develop all levels of readers—including the sophisticated readers. Teachers are encouraged to include a variety of strategies and techniques to facilitate the improved skills of advanced readers. These may include:

- Encouraging companion or family reading of different genre to gain multiple perspectives of the same topic
- Assisting students to recognize and prioritize basic reading skills such as drawing conclusions, identifying the main idea, and summarizing, depending on the type of reading material and the purpose for reading that material

- Assigning students to read across time periods to note the similarities and differences within genre over time
- Requiring students to read the author's biographic sketch while reading the author's work to recognize the correlation between motivation, talent, and achievement
- Challenging students to read several different selections within the same time frame according to one's mood or circumstance, and to identify how and why our tastes or interests for certain reading material change over the course of a day or a week.
- Encouraging students to read a "shelf" of books written by a single author
- Assigning students to read in sets or read a fiction and nonfiction source about the same topic at the same time to compare the nature and scope of the information.

Reading choices

Reading choices depend upon what students are encouraged to read and how reading materials are made available to them. Sophisticated readers need to be exposed to classical literature as well as current material such as Newbery and Caldecott winners.

Advanced readers need exposure to the literature that transcends the popular reading material of today. Most importantly, the at-home or at-school educator needs to assume the responsibility of introducing sophisticated readers to sophisticated materials. To argue that Dickens' novel, *Hard Times*, is too outdated for today's youth, minimizes both the value of the reading material and the reading tastes of our students. The reluctance to introduce students to classics in favor of the more current, popular, and much-talked-about reading material is detrimental to the development of sophisticated readers.

Conversely, keeping gifted and advanced readers away from current and popular reading material because it is believed to be too easy or valueless for such students is also detrimental to them. Both parents and teachers must work to develop the tastes of gifted and advanced readers and to trust that they can and will make appropriate selections of reading material without our constant intervention. Students are consumers and can be taught to judiciously apply criteria to make selections once such criteria are developed. The availability of so many diverse and interesting materials in this day and age demands that students be taught skills to develop reading consumerism as an integral feature of a good reading program.

A CALL TO ACTION

As academic advocates for advanced readers, parents and educators must take steps to promote excellence as well as equity. We must not allow advanced readers to be underserved by default.

At home

We know that an essential contributing factor in developing strong readers is the value parents place on reading to and with their children. Evidence also indicates that parents tend to diminish their involvement with their children's reading habits as they grow older and more proficient as readers. Parents should recognize that it is just as important for them to help sustain a child's abilities to read as it is to initiate the child's interests in learning how to read. Books and other reading materials should abound in homes, while going to the library signals to children the importance the family places on books and reading.

Browsing in bookstores can be a recreational as well as an academic activity. Parents need to teach children the art of browsing through books and selecting books for purchase. They need to be shown systematic ways to buy books by using the suggestions on booklists, becoming aware of authors, sifting through a genre or selected section of the bookstore, and surveying the books "On sale" or in the bargain section. Children need to develop the art of consumerism when buying books rather than perceiving it as a chance activity.

Even where there are many formal structures for students to engage in book discussions, the informal at-home discussions about reading material should not be discounted. Sitting around the dinner table, driving to the market, and waiting through half-time at a basketball game are opportunities to chat about different forms of reading materials.

In addition to books, parents need to introduce children to a variety of reading materials to demonstrate how they stimulate different types of discussions. Parents may use newspaper editorials, brochures, programs for different kinds of events, touring books, and instruction manuals for the basis of informal reading chats to help their children understand and experience the means by which different genre evoke different forms of discourse.

At school

Many schools are now governed by School Site Councils. It is imperative that parents have a representative for gifted children on these site councils, and that a teacher of gifted students participates in the decisions regarding policy and expenditure of funds governed by the site councils. These advocates must stress the need for appropriate staff development for teachers of reading, ensuring that they are fully aware of the needs of advanced readers and are mindful of the resources needed to support those needs.

Finally, they must ensure that quality reading materials are available for use by advanced readers. This can be accomplished both in the selection of textbooks and supplementary books at the school site, and parents can join together in an effort to provide quality materials for the classroom or school library through gifts. For example, a birthday club in which children and parents donate books in the name of a child on that child's birthday can make an important contribution to the total collection of quality materials.

At the district level

The participation of parents on advisory committees involve them, as state regulations demand, as key decision makers in some matters that govern gifted programs. The concern for advanced reading is important for both differentiated curriculum and professional development. Decisions regarding differentiated curriculum should focus on the appropriateness of print and and other resources available to augment state texts and promote in-depth, out-of-grade-level expectations for independent study. Decisions regarding professional staff development should focus on ensuring that the district curriculum specialists have outlined the reading skills and strategies that promote advanced reading, and that they have incorporated these skills within performance criteria and assessment instruments and activities so that gifted students are assessed commensurate to the instruction they receive and the abilities they can master.

At the state level

While the California Association for the Gifted is a primary advocacy voice for gifted students and their needs, it also is necessary to advocate for gifted students through other state associations. The California Reading Association and the California Parent Teacher Association are both important advocates for children, and must be made aware of the need to support advanced and sophisticated reading habits and readers. Many members of the California Association for the Gifted also belong to other associations. Each of us must convey the message concerning advanced and gifted readers to other associations in order to build a network of concern and the possibilities for united action regarding advanced readers.

As advocates of gifted and advanced readers, we do not deny the importance of promoting general literacy and providing for those who need remedial assistance. For a democratic society to flourish, it is essential that we have a literate public. But a democracy also needs the leadership of its advanced thinkers. Neglecting gifted readers at an early age is not only a disservice to them personally, but detrimental to society as a whole. We must promote academic advocacy for the forgotten readers—gifted and advanced learners. ■

The CAG Reading Task Force was established in 1997 and presented a draft form of this paper at the 1998 annual conference. Sandra Kaplan served as the chair and principal writer; contributing members of the task force were Darlene Dolan, Margaret Gosfield, Margo Hoctor, and Geri Williams.

Please join the discussion by letting us know what your school or district is doing to serve its gifted readers. What actions have your textbook or other committees taken to ensure service to gifted readers and how were they accomplished? What reading activities have been particularly enjoyable and effective at home? Sharing ideas with each other will help us all to reach our advocacy goals. E-mail the editor at gosfield@aol.com or fax to 805-687-1527.

HIGHLY ABLE READERS

Continued from 10

students access to heterogeneous and homogeneous learning experiences.

- The theme must be sufficiently broad so that it can be divided into subtopics that vary in complexity and abstractness.
- A range of appropriate reading materials must be available to support the theme.
- The theme should create opportunities for students to investigate real-life situations and utilize authentic materials and resources.
- An appropriate theme suggests a variety of learning experiences that address the goals, standards, and objectives of the required curriculum.
- Finally, a theme should capture students' interests, arouse curiosity, and promote engaged learning.

Sources for Themes

Themes in a reading and language arts curriculum which can be used with flexible grouping emerge from a number of sources.

- Topics in the social studies and science content areas reflect many of the characteristics of appropriate themes for diverse learners and promote integration of the curriculum.
- Biographical themes, such as explorers, inventors, heroes, and heroines can be used to create heterogeneous and homogeneous learning experiences.
- Themes that focus on other genres, such as historical and realistic fiction, folk tales, myths, mysteries, and fantasies, can also be used.
- Conceptual themes exploring courage, friendship, democracy, change, exploration, or

survival support the development of a range of learning experiences.

- Finally, the themes suggested in a basal reading program can be expanded to create an abstract theme that is more compatible with a program that uses flexible grouping to meet the needs of highly able readers and other diverse learners.

Heterogeneous and Homogeneous Learning Experiences

When flexible grouping is used within a thematic literacy program, both heterogeneous and homogeneous learning experiences are provided. Activities for heterogeneous groups of learners are essential for building the sense of a learning community whose members work together to achieve common goals. However, tasks designed for a heterogeneous group of students may be too difficult for some and require little effort from others. Therefore, it is essential that the open-ended activities are used to create learning experiences for heterogeneous groups of students.

Open-ended Activities

Open-ended activities allow students to make decisions about the nature of their responses. They may choose the content that will be included in the project, the types of processes used to explore the content or create the product, or the type of product. While most heterogeneous learning experiences use similar content for all students, teachers create open-ended activities when they allow students to choose the processes they will use to complete the task and/or select the type of product they will create (Hertzog, 1998). These open-ended activities reflect some aspects of the differentiated activities that are used in homogeneous learning experiences.

Multileveled Activities

In addition to the open-ended activities that are used in heterogeneous group settings, programs using flexible grouping also provide multileveled activities that address the needs of diverse learners in homogeneous and individual settings through the differentiation of content, processes, and products. As with open-ended activities, the content of differentiated activities emphasizes key concepts, principles, and generalizations rather than isolated facts and data. Although multileveled learning experiences focus on the unit theme, the nature of the content or the materials reflect the unique needs of a particular learner or group of learners.

Content Differentiation

The content of a thematic unit can be differentiated in several ways. First, content can be developed using a continuum that includes both simple and complex information (Tomlinson, 1995). Simple content emphasizes the core elements of the "big picture" with few details, while complex content also includes the intricate details that provide a more comprehensive conceptualization. Second, content can be developed using a continuum that includes both concrete and abstract ideas. Concrete content emphasizes key information whose physical properties can be seen, touched, or heard (Maker & Nielson, 1996). Abstract content, on the other hand, focuses on concepts that are not concrete, principles, generalizations, and theories.

Process Differentiation

A second means for creating appropriate curriculum for diverse learners is through the differentiation of the processes that are used to explore the unit content. The learning experiences designed for individual and homogeneous groups of students include a range of skills and strategies that help students further develop their individual literacy competencies. In addition to using a variety of literacy processes to develop differentiated activities, tasks are created that differ in the types of thinking processes that are needed to interact with the content (Maker & Nielson, 1996). Although appropriate, differentiated learning experiences actively engage all students in critical and creative thinking, the specific nature of a task elicits different levels of analytical, synthetic, and evaluative thinking. Therefore, activities should be planned that require a range of basic and advanced critical and creative thinking skills.

Product Differentiation

Finally, learning experiences for homogeneous groups and individual students may differ in the products that students are asked to create. Products can range from single-faceted to multifaceted (Tomlinson, 1995). Whereas a single-faceted product requires a limited number of steps or sources of information, a multifaceted product entails numerous steps and several sources of information must be consulted to create the product. Differentiated products can also be developed by varying the extent to which products require comprehension or transformation of information (Maker & Nielson, 1996). Products reflect transformation when there is evidence that information has been synthesized, reinterpreted, extrapolated, generalized, or viewed from a new perspective.

The successful implementation of a thematic unit that emphasizes both heterogeneous and homogeneous learning experiences demands a careful sequencing of whole group and small group, partner, or individual activities (Tomlinson, 1995). Units often begin with a whole class activity in which the theme is introduced through a simulation, an open-ended activity, or an appropriate picture book. The introductory activity is followed by a variety of heterogeneous and homogeneous partner and small group activities and individual projects. Whole class activities and instruction are interspersed throughout the unit. The following discussion of a Civil War unit illustrates the flow of these flexible grouping patterns.

Flexible Grouping in a Civil War Unit

A thematic unit focusing on the Civil War begins with the reading of the picture book *Nettie's Trip South* (Turner, 1987) to a heterogeneous group of fifth-grade students. This powerful story about a young girl's introduction to slave trading prompts students to think critically about the nature of

slavery and the circumstances that initially led to its acceptance by some and rejection by others. After reading and discussing the book as a class, students are asked to complete an open-ended writing task in which they share their personal reactions in a journal, poem, or persuasive essay. Not only do these projects reflect the characteristics of open-ended activities, they also reflect characteristics of differentiated learning experiences. The content that students include in their writing can be simple or complex, the processes used to complete the writing tasks require different literacy skills and varied levels of critical thinking, and the products can reflect comprehension or transformation of information from the selection and class discussion.

In the second phase of the unit, small group, partner, or individual projects and activities are either assigned by the teacher or selected by the students and reflect heterogeneous or homogeneous learning experiences. In this phase of the Civil War unit, the teacher selects the novels *Across Five Aprils* (Hunt, 1964), *Shades of Grey* (Reeder, 1989), *An Island Far from Home* (Donahue, 1995), and *Thunder at Gettysburg* (Gauch, 1975) to use with small homogeneous groups of students. All students are reading historical fiction that explores the inner conflicts of characters as their views about the war are challenged. At the same time, the reading levels and complexity of these novels differ (content differentiation), enabling the teacher to offer appropriately challenging materials that will assist students in further developing their reading skills. As the teacher introduces the novels that the class will be reading, she emphasizes that many historical fiction selections have been written about the Civil War and that to explore a greater number of selections, small groups of students will be reading different novels.

When homogeneous groups or partnerships are used in the second phase of the unit, instruction is provided that enables students to develop new skills, strategies, and understandings. As students read the Civil War novels, the teacher rotates among groups providing instruction in a variety of language arts skills and strategies that reflect the learning needs of each group of students. For example, students who have difficulty reading learn to identify elements of plot in *Thunder at Gettysburg*, while highly able readers examine the use of foreshadowing in *Across Five Aprils*.

At various points in this phase of the unit, the teacher initiates whole class discussions using questions applicable to each of the novels that students are reading. During these discussions, students provide responses to questions such as, "What is the basic conflict in the story? How are the characters changing as the story progresses? What are you learning about people's views of the Civil War?" Each of these questions requires critical reading of the selection (Dooley, 1993), yet the complexity of the reading material engages students in varying levels and types of analytic thinking. For example, highly able students reading *Thunder at Gettysburg* would not be challenged by these questions, but struggling readers using this selection are engaged in appropriately challenging levels of analysis. When highly able students answer these same questions as they read *Across Five Aprils*, appropriately challenging levels of analysis are required due to the complexity and intricacies of the plot in this selection. To provide further opportunities for critical reading, each novel group discusses a variety of analytic and evaluative questions designed for their particular selection (process differentiation) and the unique needs of the group members. For instance, process differentiation is used when highly able readers are asked to determine if the author created a realistic portrayal of life during this time period.

A variety of activities and projects can be initiated during and after the reading of these novels by homogeneous groups of students in the second phase of the unit. In some units, students may engage in similar activities that vary slightly in the types of products they are asked to develop. For example, students in each novel group prepare a dramatization for the class. Struggling learners recreate a scene from *Thunder at Gettysburg*, while typical students reading *Shades of Grey* dramatize a new ending for the selection that is consistent with the characters' traits and behaviors as they have been developed by the author. Advanced readers are asked to extend their thinking beyond the novel as they create a drama using character profiles and a complex conflict provided by the teacher. Although the products seem similar, the content, thinking processes, and literacy skills required to create them differ (product differentiation).

During the whole class activity in the third phase of the unit, students share information or new understandings that evolved from the small group, partner, or individual study in the second phase. In the Civil War unit, students present the dramatizations they prepared within their homogeneous groups. The whole class discusses the ambivalent feelings that individuals who were close to the fighting experienced and evaluate how effectively the dramatizations reflected these inner conflicts. To challenge all learners, including highly able readers, these discussion questions are carefully designed to prompt a variety of thinking processes and to encourage the transformation of information

Whole class instruction focusing on skills or strategies that many students do not possess also takes place in the third phase of the unit. In the Civil War unit, the teacher provides instruction on drawing conclusions and making inferences as the class reads *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994), an advanced picture book in which a black Union soldier comes to the aid of a white Union soldier as they both try to hide from the Confederate army. However, those students who have demonstrated the ability to draw conclusions and make inferences engage in challenging activities that provide opportunities for further literacy or concept development instead of participating in the whole class instruction. These students read *Pink and Say* independently and then choose an individual differenti-

ated activity to complete, such as comparing a Civil War political or military leader to one of today's leaders or creating a new plan for Reconstruction that might prevent some of the problems that actually occurred.

When homogeneous activities have been used in the second phase, heterogeneous activities are often utilized in the fourth phase of the unit. In the Civil War unit, literature circles are used to provide opportunities for students to select their own reading materials. Students who select the same novel form a group (usually heterogeneous) and decide to either read the novel aloud within their group or read it independently. When the novel is read independently and a student selects a novel that includes text beyond his current reading level, the teacher tapes the novel (or asks a student to tape it) to ensure that each student is able to participate in the literature discussion. After reading one or more chapters of the novel, students prepare journal responses in which they share their interpretations, discuss interesting or particularly meaningful passages, or make connections between the reading and their own lives. These open-ended journal responses allow each student to participate in the group's discussion of the reading, but they elicit different types of content, engage students in different types of thinking processes, and provide opportunities for students to summarize or transform information.

Upon completion of the selection, these heterogeneous groups of students develop projects which reflect important understandings or new information they acquired during their reading and small group discussions. Students may complete projects individually or develop collaborative projects that require each group member to make a significant contribution. For example, one literature group collaborates to create a mural that portrays important events in *The Perilous Road* (Steele, 1958). Students in another literature group who read *Who Comes with Cannons?* (Beatty, 1992) complete individual projects. One student demonstrates what he has learned from his extended research on the Underground Railroad by creating an oversized map that traces several important escape routes. The significance of important points along these routes are explained on tiny flags glued to the map. A second student creates a reader's theater for several important scenes in the book and enlists others in her group to perform it for the class. While another student writes the speech that Truth rose to give at the end of the book, the fourth member of the group creates a diorama of an important scene in the book. The variety of projects suggested by the teacher provides opportunities for students to select appropriately challenging, differentiated tasks.

The sharing of individual and small group projects in the final phase of the unit allows all students to develop a greater understanding of the Civil War and the conflicts that people who lived during this time period experienced within themselves and among their families. In this heterogeneous setting, the teacher asks questions that encourage students to refine the concepts they constructed during the unit and to develop generalizations that reflect significant ideas that emerged during their study and discussions.

Conclusion

The range of diversity within typical classrooms necessitates that teachers develop approaches to reading and language arts instruction that accommodate the needs and interests of individual students, particularly highly able learners who have often mastered the content and skills of the regular curriculum. At the same time, teachers recognize the importance of creating a classroom environment in which students see themselves as a community of learners with common goals and interests. The use of flexible grouping within a thematic literacy curriculum allows classroom teachers to achieve both of these goals.

Through the carefully planned cycle of heterogeneous whole group activities and heterogeneous and homogeneous small group, partner, and individual activities associated with flexible grouping, the needs and interests of diverse learners can be addressed. Optimal heterogeneous learning experiences use open-ended activities that inherently provide a degree of differentiation as students select the content, processes, or products they will use to complete tasks. Multileveled learning experiences used in homogeneous small group and individual settings are systematically planned to offer a range of tasks that differ in the complexity and abstractness of the content, the complexity of literacy skills and thinking processes that are used to explore the content, and the extent to which products are multifaceted and transformational. Creating multileveled learning experiences that focus on a common theme facilitates the development of differentiated curriculum which can be used to appropriately challenge highly able readers. ■

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The Sphinx

Here among the stones you lie,
In between tombs very high.
Stirring history up in mystery
Through your number one enemy—Time.
Your face makes us shake in terror
What beast am I describing in great myths?
The Sphinx.

Clarisse Lianne McLeod, Age 9
Los Nogales School
Pleasant Valley School District

POETRY

Continued from 17

moment and then go on with the day. Choose poems you love.

2. Have a poetry shelf on a bookshelf in your classroom and display poetry books in your classroom. Encourage students to read poems to themselves and to each other. For instance, have a designated time once a week when partners choose a poetry book and read poems to each other. At the end of the sharing time, ask students to share with the whole class anything they noticed about poets' use of language while reading these poems to each other.
3. Display printed poems so students can read and reread poems.
4. Engage students with choral poetry readings and memorization. Include body or hand movements as often as possible when "doing" a poem. Encourage dramatic play with poetry so that students choreograph their own poems to perform.
5. Have one or more children pantomime a poem while the teacher reads the poem aloud. Then, have one or more other children read that poem aloud while others pantomime the poem. Switch roles between readers and actors. Repeating a poem is definitely appropriate.
6. Keep a file of favorite poems. One file will steadily become multiple files as time passes. Be sure to document the sources of your poems on file. Choose a few of your favorites and memorize these poems to share with your students. Begin with one and steadily increase your repertoire.
7. Keep your own notebook of favorite poems. Share this with students and have them keep their own poetry notebook, recording favorite poems, writing, or drawing responses to those poems, and sharing these notebooks with classmates.
8. Play cassette tapes or CDs of poets reading or reciting their own work.
9. Make poetry part of the curriculum year round by selecting poetry to share with students connected to as many of your units of study as possible. Encourage students to seek poems connected to a particular unit of study with which you are engaged. One example of integrating poetry into a unit of study would be to have a Thanksgiving Reader's Theatre program in which students practice a performance reading of Thanksgiving poetry where each child reads a poem or perhaps partners read a poem together. Present this poetry in a program of Reader's Theatre for younger students or invite parents to the classroom to see the performance.
10. Have a poetry celebration. One format is to have students write and perform original poems. Another format is to have a themed performance where students perform poems published by other poets. Create an audience by inviting other classes and your students' parents to the performance.

Conclusion

Reading and writing poetry has been and continues to be a beacon of light that helps me push back the dark and see with more penetrating vision all that I experience in life. I share poetry with my students in the belief that it can be a beacon of light for them too. Poetry enriches the language development of my students as it enriches their lives. It seems to me that a classroom devoid of poetry is a barren place, and so I urge you to bring poetry into your classrooms that it may nurture the growth of your students as readers, writers, and sentient human beings. The students I teach continually inspire me to seek new ways to communicate, and invariably this communication takes the form of poetry, because the language of the poet with its precision and elegance speaks directly to the heart and mind of the receiver. I feel that there is no greater gift I can give my students than the love of poetry, so that long after I am gone their lives will continue to be

enriched by the reading and writing of poetry. Truly, poetry is a gift that keeps on giving. Give the gift of poetry to yourself and your students. You will always be glad you did. ■

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BALAN

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so is a gentle touch. Suggest, don't force. Be ready when the time comes, but let the reader choose the time. My mother knew how to do this.

Practice What You Preach

I certainly never realized it as a child, but today I am incredibly aware of how much my parents read. My mother and my second father still recommend books to me constantly. That exemplifies the advise we hear about in other aspects of life: setting an example is important. It works for reading as well. A home or classroom that is filled with the love of books, and reverence for the delights they bring, will engender those qualities in its occupants. Children, especially smart children, are well-tuned to hypocrisy. Singing the praises of great books while ignoring them ourselves does little to achieve our goal of creating strong readers. Besides, reading good books is hardly hard work.

Everything Will Change

Eventually, I did graduate from my infatuation with Tom and his inventions. Partially because I had read all of the books in the series. But it was also time to move on. I left science fiction behind as well. I went on to discover the works of the great English writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For many years I stubbornly refused to read anyone who was alive. These days, my wife's rampant book consumption exposes me to all types of authors I never would have considered. I am also amazed that sometimes I greatly enjoy non-fiction. If you would have asked me what I'd be reading today just three years ago, I would never have guessed. The same goes for me when I was ten. Or twelve. Or fifteen. In life, the one thing we can count on is change. The same is true for the books our children choose.

You Can't Hurry Love

In my most recent book, *Buoy, Home at Sea*, I've tried to seize my passion for the ocean and all of its mystery and beauty, and lay it out on the page—believing in my heart it is a canvas and my words are paint, and praying that I am able to wield my pen as proficiently as the talented artist who illustrated the book. Did I accomplish my goal? That's for the reader to decide. Is my book a children's book? Some think so, and some don't. I am aware that my readers may be ages eight or eighty. I believe I am wise enough to know that my book will never appeal to all children or all adults. But it matters not. For my goal is to touch a reader's heart the same way so many authors have touched mine. That may be one reader only. It may be hundreds. I would like it to be thousands. But touching one is a good thing. Because once touched, I know they will be forever smitten.

The fuel of literacy is powerful. When the spark is ignited, it is very unlikely to go out. Today, our kids may not read the great literature we desire them to. But the wonderful thing about good books is that they don't go away. As long as that spark is there, and we continue to fan the flames with care and respect, the desire for good books will be ever present in our children's lives. The books will be waiting patiently for the readers to discover them. The readers will. At their own time. At their own pace. And, I hope, with the confidence that comes from having made their own discoveries on their personal path into literature. ■

Author BRUCE BALAN is a product of California's gifted education program and now lives and works in Los Altos, California; his most recent book is *Buoy, Home at Sea*. You can find more about Bruce and his books at Bruce Balan's Office on the Web at http://cyber.kdz.com/balan.

GIFTED READERS

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imaginative thinking, visualization, exploration of values, and a language arts approach. Frezise (1978) advised rapid pacing and timing: "going deeper" into a topic, less rigidly structured learning environments, and provisions for critical thinking, reading and writing.

Model reading programs for gifted learners

Specific instructional programs for gifted readers vary from school to school and district to district. The most common programs specially designed for the gifted are described below.

The triad enrichment model (Renzulli, 1977) provides gifted children with the opportunity for self-directed reading and independent study. The enrichment triad consists of three types of activities: (1) Exploratory activities in which students investigate avenues of interest and then decide on a topic or problem to study in depth, (2) activities in which students are provided with the technical skills and thinking processes needed to investigate the research topic or problem selected in step one, (3) investigative activities in which students explore their topic or solve their problem through individual or small group work. Students then develop an end product that reflects their learning.

Inquiry reading (Cassidy, 1981) also enables the gifted reader to conduct research on topics of interest. In this four-week program for grades three and up, students select a topic, carry out research, and present their finding to others. The approach can be used by classroom teachers during the time usually reserved for basal reading instruction.

Trevise (1984) recommended that teachers have gifted readers read and discuss literacy classics as part of the Junior Great Books Reading and Discussion Program.

Junior Great Books is a highly developed, structured program encouraging careful reading of complex materials. Discussions of the readings are designed to be challenging and interesting and to focus on the universal themes that are present in the books.

Other recommended instructional models for gifted readers include AIME (Swaby, 1982), reading-strategy lessons (Goodman, Burke & Sherman, 1980), DRTA (Bates, 1984) and vocabulary development through literature (Howell, 1987).

Conclusion

Gunning (1992) provided an excellent summary of the characteristics of a model program for gifted reader:

> To grow intellectually, gifted students need challenging books. They need fiction with complex plots and carefully developed characters, and informational books that explore topics in depth. They should read books and periodicals that spark their imaginations, broaden their horizons, and cause them to wonder and question.

Equity demands that the exceptionality of gifted readers be recognized and that appropriate programs designed to meet their unique needs be made available. All students, including those gifted in reading, deserve an educational program designed to help each individual achieve his or her full potential. ■

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COMMUNICATOR

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

VOLUME 30, NO 2, SPRING 1999

ISSUE HIGHLIGHT

GIFTED EDUCATION IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Early adolescence is a particularly challenging time for all participants —students, educators, and parents. Adding giftedness and gifted education to the mix intensifies the demands on all involved. This issue seeks to provide ideas and information to help make this period both more exciting and more calming. It addresses such questions as:

What are the special needs of middle school gifted students?

How can we most effectively meet their academic needs?

Is "socialization" really the top priority at middle school?

What position does the National Middle School Association hold regarding gifted education?

What resources are available to assist parents, educators, and kids?

UPCOMING ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Summer - Parenting

Fall - Young Gifted

Winter - Math & Science

"This We Believe"

Philosophy of National Middle School Association supports gifted learners; does practice measure up?

Prepared by The Communicator Staff

We wish to thank noted author and consultant, Susan Winebrenner, who first examined the beliefs of the National Middle School Association in juxtaposition to the beliefs held by advocates for gifted education, and provided the inspiration for this article.

Controversy has surrounded the placement of and service to gifted students in public middle schools ever since the publication of Jeannie Oakes' *Keeping Track* (1985), and continued with the appearance of Robert Slavin's *Ability Grouping in the Middle Grades: Achievement Effects and Alternatives*, (1993). Some districts, echoing Oakes' position that ability grouping is undemocratic, have completely eliminated homogeneous grouping for gifted students in their middle schools, and others have severely restricted ability grouping, claiming that the needs of gifted students can be met through solid middle school philosophy and practices.

Advocates for gifted education maintain that democracy demands

See THIS WE BELIEVE, 38

Teaching Kids To Care

Character development and the middle school student

BY JAMES R. DELISLE

It had all the trappings of a bad soap opera: Brian, a young father of two, with a budding career in telecommunications, suffered a stroke at age 29. Bravely, and with the help of his wife and family, he slowly recovered, only to suffer a second stroke after someone threw a rock through his car window, hitting Brian in the head, causing extensive neurological damage.

The news of this personal tragedy hit the airwaves of our local TV stations. This was no soap opera, this was an act of random violence in a world growing increasingly blase towards personal acts of terror from which even the innocent cannot escape. As a middle school teacher of children old enough to be aware of terrorism and gifted enough to be sensitive to the ripples of pain that such an event stirs, I knew it was time to act; for when children are old and wise enough to care, it is

See TEACHING KIDS TO CARE, 41

PUBLISHED BY THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

The CAG Communicator is published four times during the year: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Opinions expressed by individual authors do not necessarily represent official positions of the Association. Subscriptions are available to non-members at an annual cost of $25.

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LETTERS

Fall Issue on Teaching

The fall issue of the *Communicator* which highlights teaching gifted children is a treasure house of pertinent information. Its timeliness and appropriate discussions of new paradigms in the field of gifted education help us all to focus on and develop plans for more effective communication to teachers, administrators and parents as part of the team. Thank you for a highly useful edition of the *Communicator.*

Sheila Smith, Coordinator
Gifted/Talented Programs
Los Angeles Unified School District

Texas Response to Reading Issue

Congratulations on a fine issue of the *Communicator.* The worthy theme was developed in useful ways for parents, educators, and students. You'll probably get some new subscribers based on my compliments about the issue in my graduate classes. Keep up the good work!

Kathy Hargrove, Director
Gifted Students Institute and
Pre-College Programs
Southern Methodist University,
Dallas, Texas

Hoagies' Web Page

One of your subscribers described your wonderful current issue of the *Communicator,* and its article by Dr. Levande…What I'd like is to get a copy of this particular issue (so that I can put it on my website).

Carolyn Kottmeyer
Hoagies' Gifted Education Page
www.ocsc.com/hoagies/gift.htm

Editor's Note
The Levande article on model reading programs has since been posted at the above website; the Communicator *has also been added to the Hoagies' Journals section. Sharing information and promoting communication are our primary goals, and we are pleased to have made this connection.*

A Parent's View

Thanks so much for a terrific issue of the *Communicator!* The final version of the title article read very well. It was a great idea to make reading the entire focus of one issue. It's integral to so many other areas of learning.

Deborah Kleffman
Pleasanton, CA

The California Association for the Gifted serves its members in many valuable ways:

- **Institutes and conferences for educators and families**
- **Parenting strategies to nurture giftedness**
- **Advocacy to assure funds for GATE programs**
- **Publications about differentiated curriculum and contemporary issues affecting gifted students**

CAG is a mission-driven, volunteer administered, non-profit association.

CORRECTION

In the winter issue, we mistakenly identified author Julia Candace Corliss as "Dr." Mrs. Corliss reports that she is currently working on her Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate University and hopes to complete her research and dissertation in 2000.

CALENDAR

CAG BOARD MEETINGS

JUNE 4–6, 1999
Los Angeles Airport Hilton

Board Meetings are open to the public. If a meeting is scheduled in your area and you wish to attend, please call the CAG office for specific information.

CAG SUMMER TEACHER INSTITUTES

AUGUST 16–20, 1999
Summer School for Teachers
Santa Barbara

AUGUST 21–22, 1999
Curriculum Writing
Santa Barbara

38TH ANNUAL CAG CONFERENCE

MARCH 3–5, 2000
"Century of Reflections—Honoring the Past, Imagining the Future"
Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

JULY 30–AUGUST 1, 1999
18th Annual SENG Conference, "Reflecting on Our Past, Envisioning Our Future"
Chicago, IL, For more information, call 330-672-7935

AUGUST 2–6, 1999
13th Biennial World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, "Gifted and Talented: A Challenge for the New Millennium," Istanbul, Turkey. For details, call 818-368-7501.

SEPTEMBER 24–26, 1999
Annemarie Roeper Symposium "Psychological Approaches to Understanding the Gifted Self"
Chicago, IL, For more information, call 330-672-7935

NOVEMBER 3–7, 1999
National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), US
"Pathways to the Millennium"
Albuquerque, New Mexico USA
For information, call 202-785-4268

FROM THE PRESIDENT

MARGE HOCTOR

A conversation I once had with a successful gifted adult has stayed with me for years. This individual had survived numerous serious health problems throughout his life. When he asked me to guess what he considered the worst time of his life, it seemed obvious to me—the surgeries. He said, "No, it was when I was in middle school." He was in a gifted program in elementary school, and high school advanced placement classes met his needs. In middle school, however, he had no classes with his intellectual peers and spent most of his time being taught things he already knew. He felt alone and isolated and considers those years a total waste of time and the worst of his life.

Recent emphasis on education and research regarding students at all levels of development, has resulted in more attention to the importance of meeting the intellectual needs of the middle school child. This issue of the *Communicator* provides a wealth of information and resources for parents and educators of these middle grade students who are "Caught in the Middle."

The middle school student is often the first to be overlooked when considering K-12 academic programs for gifted students. There are many elementary programs designed to meet the diverse needs of students including gifted learners; and while there are presently few "gifted programs" at the high school level, at least advanced classes are offered for those who wish to take advantage of them.

Many middle school educators express concern that if gifted students are scheduled into GATE academic classes, they will not have the opportunity to interact with the heterogeneous school population. Students who takes GATE language arts, science and/or social science may remain with the same students in all other classes as a result of scheduling. Many also express the opinion that middle school is a time for socialization rather than intellectual stimulation. We need to take a second look at this philosophy. Social interaction is important, but not at the cost of sacrificing the intellectual growth of students and the opportunity to interact with their mental peers at least part of the time during these important developmental years.

A recent study called *Academic Diversity in the Middle School: Results of a National Survey of Middle School Administrators and Teachers* conducted by Carolyn M. Callahan, Tonya R. Moon, and Carol Ann Tomlinson from the University of Virginia reveals that "it is the belief of nearly half of the principals and teachers that middle school learners are in a plateau learning period—a theory which supports the idea that basic skills instruction, low level thinking, and small assignments are appropriate." As Carol Ann Tomlinson stated at the recent CAG Conference, the latest research tells us that is absolutely not true; the brain is still developing at this age and it is imperative that it be nurtured and stimulated.

There are good programs in place, and we should learn from them as we seek to improve gifted education in general. I hope the information in this *Communicator* will aid you as you discuss the important issue of the needs of our gifted adolescents with your colleagues; we must provide them with a quality educational experience in middle school. ■

MARGARET GOSFIELD

The topic of gifted education in middle schools is of special interest to me because I was a middle grade level teacher for 20 years. In the beginning, we were part of the old MGM (mentally gifted minors) program, though in our district it was called ELO (Enhanced Learning Opportunity). Even then, the term "gifted" was considered elitist and one that had to be used sparingly, if at all. I taught social science to 7th and 8th grade gifted students; the students had a similar combination class in language arts.

When our school changed from a junior high school to a middle school in 1982, the big question was, what will we do with the incoming gifted 6th graders? Our district had decided that 6th graders in general would participate in academic core classes (English, reading, social science, and math) with a single teacher, and two additional courses with content specialist teachers. This would ease the transition from self-contained elementary classes to departmentalized secondary classes. But would it be advisable to put gifted students together for four periods every day? The decision makers could not bring themselves to make such a drastic move, and during the first year, gifted 6th graders were together only one-period a day for an exploratory class. It quickly became clear that this was not adequate; these youngsters needed more challenge in academic arenas. At a district level meeting, one brave principal spoke up and stated, "If we're going to serve these students appropriately, we need to bite the bullet and provide them with a GATE core program."

So, what does it take to serve gifted middle level students appropriately? In this issue we have tried to address this question from a variety of perspectives. In looking at the philosophical and program issues related to middle school gifted education, we are fortunate to have the results of a six-year project carried out in Texas and reported by Evelyn Hiatt from the Texas Education Agency. Consultant Elinor Ruth Smith points out the difficulties inherent in programs at this level in her article, "The Balancing Act." Jim Delisle from Kent State University presents an inspiring prescription for "Teaching Kids to Care," while a reprint of *Social Development or Socialization?* includes Linda Silverman's persuasive arguments against the myth that gifted middle schoolers' greatest need is to be placed in heterogeneous classes so they can learn to get along with other students; in fact, they are comparatively very well adjusted. Finally, Barbara Lateer describes how one middle school in the San Jose Unified School District has been accepted by the International Baccalaureate Organization to implement the Middle Years Program.

We have also tried to explore the position of the National Middle School Association in relation to the issues of gifted education in two presentations. Highlights of the National Middle School Association philosophy are presented in the article, "This We Believe," while a review and analysis of a book published by the Association is also included—*Dilemmas in Talent Development in the Middle Grades: Two Views.*

We have practical recommendations for parents in Linda Brug's article, "What Parents Want to Know About Gifted Middle School Students and Aren't Afraid to Ask." This is followed with more practical advice from Cherie Drummond who delineates what parents and students need to do in preparing for college during the middle school years.

We have an especially rich offering of ideas for teachers to try in their classes. Carol Ann Tomlinson from the University of Virginia shares a successful strategy for the development of vocabulary in her "Super Sentences: A Delightful Way to Challenge Young Wordmongers," while Debra Johnson describes the benefits and methods of preparing middle school student portfolios. Karen Buxton provides a pick-me-up lesson plan in "Mona Lisa With a Mustache" and Shirley Patch differentiates the curriculum in "How To Do Real Research." Steven Kahl shares the wisdom and benefits of pre-assessing students at the beginning of the year in order to differentiate curriculum as the school term progresses.

And, of course, we have another Student Challenge Center. We are pleased that responses are coming in for the winter challenges; look for the best to be published in the summer.

The middle school years are a challenge for all involved—parents, educators, and students. We hope this issue of the *Communicator* provides insights and ideas to assist in meeting that challenge. Please let us know what you think; we'd like to hear from you. ■

What Parents Want to Know About Gifted Middle School Students and Aren't Afraid To Ask

BY LINDA BRUG

How much time should my 7th grade child spend on homework?" "What if I don't like the friends my child hangs around with?" "What do I do with an underachiever?" These are just a few of the questions posed to me during an annual GATE middle school parent session held in our district. As a GATE teacher and parent of a middle school child, I have frequently pondered the same questions.

Homework

During these sessions I try to orient parents to some of the challenges of the middle school years. Parents are always concerned about the balance of parental involvement in daily homework. In my opinion it is important to monitor the completion of homework throughout the middle school years. It is important for parents to have early contact with their child's teachers. Open House is a good time to really listen to the expectations of the teachers. If a child does not seem to be doing homework or matching the expectations of a teacher, parents should make contact with that teacher quickly; do not wait until home notices or grades arrive. If there is a concern the parent, child, and teacher should meet together to create a plan for improvement.

As a teacher I find that all students need assignment books. Many schools even provide them for their students. Assignment books make it easier to develop student responsibility while at the same time facilitate communication between teacher and parent. I have found that when a teacher signs the assignment book, it verifies the specific assignments for parents, making it easier for them to encourage and support their reluctant students.

It is important to make the student responsible for getting the signature while the parent needs to contact the teacher if the student fails to do so. Rewards and consequences make this system effective. At times it is also appropriate for the parent to set standards for the quality of work, but parents must allow students to learn the skills necessary to successfully complete assignments. Never do the homework for your child. As a parent it is important to remember that you must let your child make mistakes since that is the way that we all learn those important lessons.

Time Management

Many times students need help in developing a time management program. I share a couple of ways to use time effectively such as first analyzing how time is used and misused. Students should establish priorities, budget time, set a deadline, and give priority to hard jobs. Frequently students put assignments off until the last minute and cannot create a quality product. A large calendar and assignment book can help students break down an assignment and complete portions of the assignment in reasonable time blocks.

Many students are unorganized. While most teachers require a binder, it is important for students to learn to file papers and homework assignments in the appropriate areas. Traditional tabs help with this organization along with a weekly backpack clean-out. As students get older their homework requires more concentration. Students should find a place to work and read that is away from distractions such as the television and the telephone.

Academic Concerns

Many parents share that they have had some questions or concerns about an academic program or specific assignment. As a teacher I always recommend that parents call a teacher with those concerns since he or she can most effectively address the concern or assignment. Many teachers are defensive when parents go to an administrator instead of going directly to them, and perhaps a better relationship can be formed when a teacher, student, and parent address concerns together. Obviously there are times when a parent must discuss issues with an administrator when all other avenues have been exhausted.

Underachievement

Inevitably the plight of the underachieving gifted student is discussed at length. It is a myth that gifted students can get a good education on their own. Gifted students are probably the most underachieving of all groups within the school population. This is perhaps the most difficult problem for teachers and parents to solve, and the best advice that I can give parents is to help their child find a passion in life. Each child has to find a passion and each at a different pace. Some find it in the second grade and others don't find their passion for years. If a child is interested in how things work, try to provide old machines that they can take apart and examine. Try to provide books about the subject for them to read. Summer school classes are often available for special classes in art, photography, or music. It is important, however, not to over schedule your child's time. Children need time to ponder as well as to act.

Interestingly, involvement in extracurricular activities has been found to be a much better predictor of real-world success than are high IQ

scores—or even good grades. Leadership and peer counseling classes should be encouraged for those talented in the interpersonal area. Summer enrichment programs are available for those students interested in meeting new people and exploring new ideas. Parents should call their district GATE office for additional information.

Peer Influence

As the session continues, the discussion predictably moves to the importance of peers at the middle school level. It is important for parents to acknowledge the influence of peers at this age. Parents should know their child's friends and frequently invite them to hang out at their house. If they're at your house, at least you know where they are. At most, you can have a positive influence on them and their peers. Remember to continue to spend time with your adolescents even though they appear to be pulling away from you. This is time well spent.

Preparing for High School

Finally, parents want to know how they can best prepare their middle school student for high school. Read, read, and read some more. I hand parents a reading list and remind them to continue reading aloud to their child. Students who are good readers are more successful in all subjects. If your child's teacher doesn't have a reading list prepared, perhaps the school librarian or ninth grade language arts teachers at the high school do; give them a call. Parents can also provide valuable experiences for their children by taking them to museums, family vacations, and new places that create curiosity and wonderful memories for all.

Even though gifted middle school students present a challenge, their sense of humor and unique view of the world remind us of the great gift they have to offer the world. ■

LINDA BRUG developed the GATE core program at DeAnza Middle School in Ventura Unified School District. She now teaches Advanced Placement classes at Ventura High School. She also serves as CAG's Educator Representative for the Pacific Region.

RELATIONSHIPS: GIFTED KIDS AND THEIR PARENTS

Excerpts from *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide*, in the chapter on "Relationships." (See a review of this book on p. 16)

What Gifted Students Want from Their Parents

According to our survey, these are the top ten things gifted students wish their parents would do (or not do):

1. Be supportive and encouraging; be there for us; be on our side.
2. Don't expect too much of us; don't expect perfection.
3. Don't pressure us, be too demanding, or push too hard.
4. Help us with our schoolwork/homework.
5. Help us to develop our talents.
6. Be understanding.
7. Don't expect straight A's.
8. Allow us some independence; give us space; trust us, because chances are we know what we're doing.
9. Talk to us; listen to us.
10. Let us try alternative educational/special programs. (p. 229)

Six Reasons Why Parents Are the Way They Are

1. Some parents believe that if they set their expectations high, their children will naturally rise to meet them.
2. Parents often see themselves reflected in their children.
3. Sometimes parents make demands on their children in an effort to fulfill their own hopes and dreams.
4. Perhaps one (or both) of your parents is also gifted.
5. Parents suffer frequent memory lapses.
6. Parents are worriers. (p. 230–231)

WHEN HOMEWORK'S BEYOND YOU

Let's face it, there are times when your kids need help with their homework and even you as an adult can't help. Try these two websites with your children.

www.scri.fsu.edu/~dennisl/CMS.html

Cyberspace Middle School is designed and updated by Dr. Larry Dennis, in the Department of Physics at Florida State University, especially for middle school students.It is supported by the US National Science Foundation, the US Department of Energy and Florida State University. Originally started as a home page for middle school science teachers it has become a website which not only provides assistance with science projects but offers an activity center, resource guides, new discoveries in science, and a space for letters from fans.

http://tristate.pgh.net/~pinch13/pinchright.htm

This web site has received more than 105 web awards for 11-year-old B.J. Pinchbeck and his dad. They boast that it can help you find anything you need to assist with homework. It is endorsed by National Student Association.

It's Never Too Early for College Prep

What to do during middle school

BY CHERIE K. DRUMMOND

My child is only in middle school (or junior high). I don't need to think about college planning yet, do I?" Yes, you do! Too often people start thinking about college in the latter years of high school. However, unless an exceptional foundation has been laid in previous years, that is too late.

Parents of middle school children need to work with their children to prepare for their future, whether or not a four-year college is the goal. Careful planning and preparation is essential. Some people view the middle school years as a time for "treading water" or "do no harm" thinking that students just need to "get through" that time without being mentally or physically injured. Instead, it should be viewed as a developmental time that should be maximized, since it is time that can never be reclaimed later.

Colleges are looking for students who will be successful at the university level as evidenced by grades, standardized test scores, long term commitment to meaningful activities, "balance" among the many facets of life, and intellectual and academic motivation and prowess.

Parents and students alike have an awesome responsibility during the middle school years; many of the decisions made by students now will impact their high school and post secondary life. Not every gifted student wants to nor should attend a four-year college. However, that determination is premature at this stage; you should strive to keep all options available. So what steps should parents and students take during middle school? Here are two lists of things that have proven to be helpful—one for parents, and one for students.

PARENTS

Financial aspects must be considered. College costs continue to escalate much faster than the cost of living. For those who can, a regular or forced savings program is an excellent idea. For all, it is important to start exploring scholarship opportunities. Most of the money is available on a need basis, but there are also some high quality, but not Ivy League, schools who award merit scholarships to attract stellar students. Some scholarships are directed toward specific populations, whether by ancestry or occupation, or any other particulars. Most of these are available annually, so if a family looks into these possibilities early, life is much less hectic during the senior year. The family will already know which scholarships should be available and what the applications require.

Some of the following points exemplify good parenting, which continues to be fundamental in the middle years.

Strive for and expect excellence, not perfection. Be aware that gifted children can be very hard on themselves and "pushy" parents can drive them from excellence into perfectionism; this in turn may cause the opposite—underachievement. But do set the expectation of excellence.

Be a positive advocate for a challenging curriculum for your student. If children are able to be "successful" by getting "good grades" with little effort, they will not develop the crucial study skills colleges require. (Also see the student section for "take the most rigorous, yet enjoyable, curriculum available to you.") This is also a time for exploration of interests, a time to try new subject areas without fear of the grade on the transcript for college. Be aware of the high school and college requirements to ensure that your student is on a college bound path, should that be the optimal choice when the time comes.

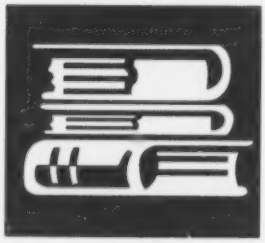
Establish a positive learning environment. Assist your children in acquiring sound study habits including a set time and an appropriate place to study. Review school work with students. Help students understand the relationship between learning and earning. Recognize that just completing daily homework doesn't constitute "studying". Work daily on long term projects. Read ahead in assignments, or read collaterally to the content being emphasized in

See COLLEGE PREP, 44

Selected Readings

Gifted Education and Middle Schools

The following list of readings has been excerpted from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education (ERIC EC), The Council for Exceptional Children. The full list can be found on its website at www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm. This document was last updated in January of 1998, and compiled by Sandra Berger.



BURTON-SZABO, S. (Jan-Feb 1996). Special Classes for Gifted Students? Absolutely. *Gifted Child Today Magazine*, 19(1), 12-15,50. EJ519842
This article makes a case for special classes for gifted students and answers objections to special classes raised by the middle school movement and the cooperative learning movement. A sample "Celebration of Me" unit taught to gifted seventh graders which involved poetry, literature, personal development, art, music, and physical fitness is outlined.

CLINKENBEARD, P. R. (1991). Unfair Expectations: A Pilot Study of Middle School Students' Comparisons of Gifted and Regular Classes. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 15(1) 56-63. EJ441230
Analysis of essays comparing experiences in gifted and regular classes written by sixth grade gifted students found that many students felt teachers and peers outside the gifted class had unfair expectations of them. Other topics addressed by students included grading, group work, lack of acknowledgement for effort, treatment by peers, and teacher expectations.

Coleman, M. R. , & Gallagher, J. J. (Sum 1995). The Successful Blending of Gifted Education with Middle Schools and Cooperative Learning: Two Studies. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 18(4) 362-84. EJ511771
Features of programs that successfully blended the middle school (MS) model or cooperative learning (CL) model with gifted education were assessed. Site visits were made to five MS sites and five CL sites at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Studies showed that gifted students' needs can be met within these programs, with appropriate planning and implementation.

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Thirty sixth graders in accelerated mathematics classes were taught in cooperative learning teams for 12 weeks. Students appeared to benefit academically, personally, and socially from the cooperative learning strategies used to teach mathematics, cooperative learning skills, effective communications, internal locus of control, and personal responsibility in decision-making.

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This article examines the unique organizational structure of middle schools and the historical context leading to their development. A true middle school is described as providing personalized curricula for the learning needs of diverse learners through use of problem-oriented interdisciplinary teams and flexible grouping practices.

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The perceptions of 175 gifted education teachers and 147 middle-school teachers concerning gifted education needs were compared. Gifted educators disagreed with proponents of cooperative learning concerning student needs and disagreed with middle-school educators

See SELECTED READINGS, 46

Science students examine real problems which provide added depth and complexity to their studies.

Addressing the Needs of Middle Grade Gifted Students

BY EVELYN HIATT

Addressing the needs of gifted students is difficult at any grade span, but there are unique issues that confront the educator at the middle school level. Since 1990, and the Carnegie publication of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, middle schools have been undergoing profound changes that often appear to conflict with appropriate educational practices designed to meet the unique needs of gifted students. However, on closer analysis, use of the recommendations included in *Turning Points* can offer exciting opportunities for serving advanced level students.

In Texas, which embraced *Turning Points* as an opportunity to focus on middle grades education, the potential controversy between practitioners of middle school and gifted education was addressed head on. One of 15 states to receive a grant from the Carnegie Corporation to implement the Turning Points recommendations statewide, the Texas project was collaboratively designed by the Divisions of Middle School Education and Advanced Academic Services at the Texas Education Agency. Relying heavily on the work of Dr. Sandra Kaplan, the project addressed the question, "If teams of teachers are provided in-depth professional development in curriculum development and instructional strategies usually used with gifted learners, is it possible to meet the academic needs of gifted learners within the heterogeneous classroom?"

The project, which began in 1993 and continues through the 1999 school year, has had mixed results. During the first year, all teachers received a 10 to 12 day overview of curriculum development and classroom models. The emphasis was on adding depth and complexity to the curriculum, as this is a requirement for services to gifted students in the state of Texas. In following years, the instructional teams received ongoing professional development and support from project consultants. Additionally, Dr. Sandra Kaplan did on-site observations and provided feedback designed both to track the progress of the teachers and to give them new targets to attain following the visits. Not all campuses responded positively to the increased expectations that were placed upon them. However, valuable information on providing appropriate services for gifted middle school students was obtained even from those campuses that withdrew from the project.

Depth and Complexity

Depth and complexity are increasingly common terms when discussing the education of gifted students. The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted Students requires that curriculum and instruction for gifted students be modified in terms of pacing, depth, and complexity. However, the first component of the training was to provide a solid grounding in the attributes of both depth and complexity. As used by Dr. Sandra Kaplan, the term

"depth" refers to exploration within a discipline. How do teachers and students dig deeper into the curriculum? There are a number of attributes that are critical, both for building academic awareness of a discipline and for assuring that the needs of motivated and advanced students are met. First, teachers can introduce students to the language of the discipline. What does it mean to hold "revisionist" views of history? What does it mean when a literary work is a "revision"? Many times, teachers and parents unwittingly talk down to students, thinking that is the best way to be understood. However, students with deep interest in a discipline want to know, and need to know how professionals in that field talk to one another. Because students are starting specific subject area courses at the middle school level, it is particularly important that teachers at this level talk to the students using an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary.

Another way of adding depth to a discipline is to emphasize its details—those things that make it unique from other subject areas. It also is necessary for students to understand the rules that governs a specific discipline. This covers areas as diverse as how the parts of government interact with one another, to the way in which scientific experiments are carried out. Sometimes educators overlook the importance of "just the facts," but these details will be critical building blocks in more fully developing the other dimensions of depth.

Two of these dimensions, patterns and trends can only be established if the student has a good grasp on the details and rules of the disciplines. By studying patterns, students will become more aware of recurring events, elements, events, and ideas that are repeated over time. Emphasizing trends enables students to identify the various factors that affect and influence major concepts and ideas within a discipline. It is important for students to understand the patterns and trends of a discipline because these dimensions allow students to knowledgeably speculate on the final three dimensions of depth—focusing on the big ideas, which define the principles, theories and generalizations of an area of study, ethical issues and the unanswered questions of a discipline. These last components of depth are not to be viewed as topics to be presented late in a student's school career. Students at all grade levels are often asked to comment on ethical considerations in the stories they read or in historical and scientific events. However, only by offering students the opportunity to consider the details, patterns, and trends of a discipline can we provide students with the evidence they need to present their viewpoints. And only by encouraging them to use the language of a discipline can their opinions be offered in a knowledgeable manner.

Developing teachers with good backgrounds in their disciplines is the first step to introducing depth into the middle school classroom.

Just as depth provides a firm foundation within a discipline, complexity focuses on building understanding within and across disciplines. As we look at subjects over time, across disciplines, and from multiple perspectives, those subjects become richer and more complex. When we study views of the Civil War from primary sources as opposed to the PBS program, *The Civil War*, we see how interpretations of events have changed over time. When students study that same event by reading speeches made in the Confederate Congress and the U. S. Congress, they begin to understand the different perspectives in which the war was viewed. Students use the knowledge they have gained to begin to draw more sophisticated conclusions about issues, concepts, and events within disciplines.

The Change Process

Probably the most important lesson learned in the project is that adding depth and complexity to the general curriculum is a difficult and time-consuming task. While this may sound obvious, it is at the heart of the oft-stated truism, "If all teachers used 'gifted strategies' all students would perform like gifted students." Adding depth and complexity and using strategies that allow for an open-ended curriculum requires a change in what many teachers have been doing in their classrooms, and change is always an uncomfortable process. Some teachers simply did not wish to go through that process at the same time they were going through other middle grade reform. Further, in order to be successful, teachers had to be proficient in their discipline. Many middle grade educators were not required to obtain and do not have a content specialty. This means it is difficult for them to add depth or complexity to their lessons. Two

See ADDRESSING NEEDS, 48

Middle School: The Balancing Act

BY ELINOR RUTH SMITH

Middle school is often a time of increased expectations and pressures for gifted students, heightened anxieties for their parents, and conflicting views on the part of teachers and schools about their responsibilities to the students. Somewhere in middle school there occurs a shift from viewing the gifted student as someone with abilities in need of development to seeing this student as one who should unfailingly produce and achieve at the highest levels as measured by work output and grades. Accordingly, at this level, many gifted programs consist of honors and advanced classes, foreshadowing what is to come in high school. Others leave gifted students to fend for themselves in regular classes where teachers, often untrained, are expected to modify curriculum to meet the needs of a few gifted students.

The disconnections that may accompany the transition from elementary to middle school include having to adjust to the styles and demands of several teachers instead of one, an increase in homework assignments, less personal contact with each teacher, less dependence on assistance from teachers, and greater responsibility for self-monitoring during the school day. These occur amid the onset of the physical and social-emotional changes of adolescence. All students must learn to cope with theses. Gifted students, however, often experience additional stresses.

For some, especially those who sailed through unchallenging curriculum in elementary school, increased expectations for achievement, almost as proof of their giftedness, may be an unexpected jolt. Parents' sense that school now counts for more, coupled with concern over the right sequence of courses to pave the way for advanced courses in high school, may create added pressures. On the other hand, in middle schools which target instruction toward average students and expect gifted students to take lessons to a more complex level on their own, they may suffer from a lack of direction and feelings of neglect while at the same time experiencing pressures to succeed at the highest levels.

Whatever form services to gifted students at the middle level may take, there are several important issues to consider. Among them are development of a valuing of intellectual activity and achievement, creation of an appropriate balance between cognitive and psychosocial needs, and exploration of connections between the curriculum and the world outside school.

Valuing Intellectual Achievement

Modeling and teaching scholarly behaviors and habits of mind can help students develop an appreciation for intellectual achievement and for their own intellectual abilities. Providing opportunities for practicing scholarly behaviors makes it possible to establish expectations for scholarliness and high levels of discourse in the classroom. Though some students come to these more naturally than others, it is important to remember that for many students these behaviors need to be taught.

Of course, this requires a rich curriculum which, rather than focusing solely on acceleration of pace and quantity of work, centers on real problems and issues, incorporates student interests, is more abstract and complex, and emphasizes depth over coverage. The teaching and learning strategies must involve inquiry, higher level thinking, and development of creativity with students acquiring an understanding of the problem solving and investigatory processes in which they engage both within and across various disciplines. When accompanied by learning how to evaluate their own

thinking and products through approaches such as the self-reflection part of the portfolio process, these strategies provide students with powerful tools for further academic study and their future life involvements.

For students accustomed to measuring their accomplishment by simple completion of tasks and assignments with the least expenditure of effort and with little concern for standards of quality, it takes time and patience at this level to help them see the need to evaluate their work against qualitative standards. While completion certainly is one goal of assigned work, learning to evaluate one's work for its intellectual quality and skill of execution as appropriate is necessary to developing a value for scholarliness and intellectual achievement.

Balancing Cognitive and Psychosocial Needs

The tendency to emphasize academic achievement over social-emotional development for gifted middle school students compounds their inclination to rely on cognitive skills in decision making, personal problem-solving, and self-examination, leaving out their emotions. Having done a lot of analytical self-examination during the elementary years—much earlier than their age peers—many gifted adolescents resist the self-examination that most young people do appropriately at this age level. Furthermore, middle school throws students into an environment in which there is suddenly an emphasis on socialization, an area in which many gifted students lack skills because of their uneven development.

Gifted middle school students can benefit greatly from curriculum that includes attention to the affective domain as well as strategies for examining moral, ethical, cultural, and interpersonal issues. Issues of self-esteem, perfectionism, acceptance of giftedness, dealing with others' expectations, feeling different, stress management, and coping with failure are all among the psychosocial needs of gifted adolescents. Organizing curriculum and instruction to incorporate opportunities for learning in these areas is essential to the personal development and academic achievement of gifted students. The middle school years are a time during which many are forming the sense of values and motivation which underlie these developments and will be the basis for present and future accomplishments.

Exploring Connections

The degree to which gifted middle school students are able to experience personal connectedness to the curriculum and instruction in which they are participants, is a large factor in determining their level of motivation for school. Further, involvement with experts and mentors in various fields, a focus on student interests and real problems, attention to social-emotional needs and attendant learnings, and development of scholarly behaviors all enhance students' perceptions of connections between school and the world outside school.

Sometimes both parents and teachers, out of concern for steering the proper course for their gifted students' future education, overemphasize the outward measures of achievement such as grades and put little emphasis on the effort and learning the grades symbolize. Likewise, there is often an emphasis on the gifted student as achiever of good grades rather than as scholar/learner/self-directed individual with unique abilities, personal interests, and individual preferences. For the student this can give the impression that all that counts are grades, causing a disconnect between learning and school achievement and leading to the kind of cynicism seen in some students who are going through the motions of school without much self-investment. As one student put it, "School is the place you go to learn to do what someone else wants you to do."

If we are to engage gifted middle school students in the rigorous curriculum for which they are particularly suited and build the skills necessary for achievement not only in academic settings, but in careers and life, middle school must allow for the exploration of the connection between the school curriculum and students' personal qualities, personal interests, possible careers, and quality of life. Middle school is a critical turning point for many gifted students. It can be a time for turning students toward success by focusing not only on academic abilities, but equally on developing creative abilities, personal values, decision-making abilities, and interpersonal skills, all of which connect to foster positive self-concept, self-esteem, self-directedness, and ultimately achievement.

Balancing Act

Middle school, the bridge between the elementary years and the more independent years of high school and later adolescence, is the perfect time to focus on all these issues. Training gifted students to habits of independence, scholarliness, self-knowledge, and engagement with rigor is the role of the middle school. It is a balancing act.

Not any of this is a new conception or based on new understandings. It is the execution on a school-wide basis that is rarer than it ought to be. Maintaining the shifting balances in the home/school/student partnership, as well as between the academic and the personal, the cognitive and the affective, and between school and the non-school world takes skill, understanding, and persistence. By doing so we create powerful models for gifted students and benefits that we can't afford to overlook for all students. ■

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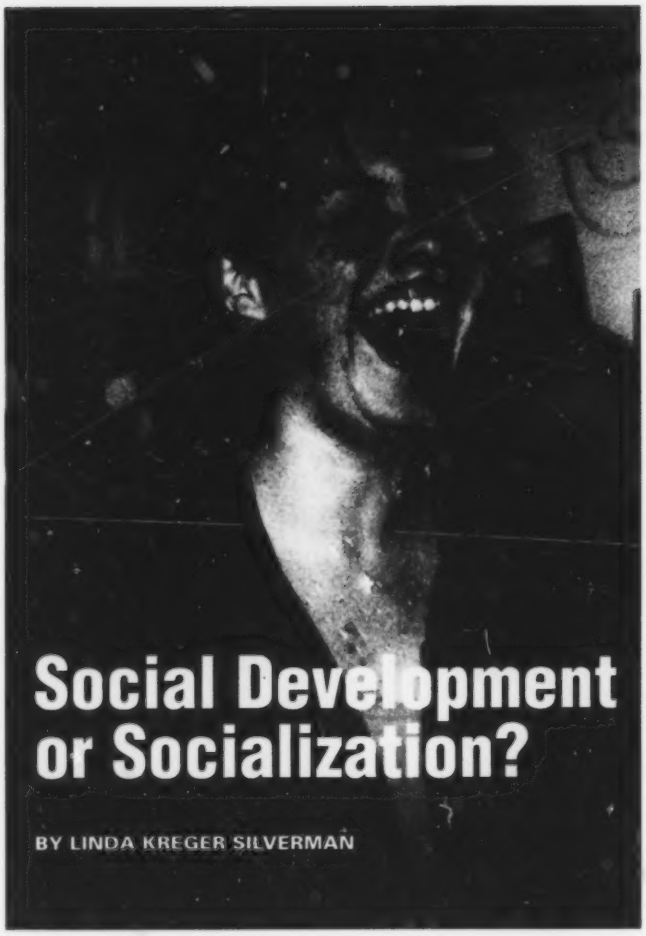

Social Development or Socialization?

BY LINDA KREGER SILVERMAN

Editor's Note: The need for "socialization" is an argument many proponents of heterogeneous grouping use to eliminate ability grouping for gifted students in middle schools. Gifted students have so many problems in getting along with others—or so the argument goes—that the important thing at middle school age is to put them "in the real world" in heterogeneous classes so they will be better able to function in later years.

But does this argument hold true? Read what one expert in the field has to say about the issue. The following article is reprinted by permission of the author and the Gifted Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

A major concern of parents and educators is the social adjustment of their gifted children. All provisions for gifted students—ability grouping, acceleration, pull-out programs, full day programs, special schools, homeschooling—are held suspect on the grounds that they will "prevent the children's social adjustment." Indeed, the remarkable emphasis on the school as an agent of socialization makes one wonder if anyone really cares about the development of these children's abilities or if all that is important is whether they fit in!

As a psychologist who has spent over 30 years studying the social and emotional development of the gifted, I believe we need to clearly differentiate between the concepts of social development and socialization. An immense amount of research has accumulated over the last 70 years on socialization of the gifted, indicating that gifted children tend to enjoy greater popularity, social adjustment, and social competence, earlier psychological maturity, and fewer indications of psychological problems than their less gifted peers (Silverman, 1993). In their recent comprehensive review of the literature, Nancy Robinson and Kate Noble report:

> Perusal of a large group of studies of preadolescent children revealed [that] ...as a group, gifted children were seen as more trustworthy, honest, socially competent, assured and comfortable with self, courteous, cooperative, stable, and humorous, while they were also seen as showing diminished tendencies to boast, to engage in delinquent activity, to aggress or withdraw, to be domineering, and so on. (N. Robinson & Noble, 1991, p. 62)

It would appear obvious from these studies that gifted children are highly socialized. It is interesting that the context of most of these studies was some form of special provision for the gifted, such as special classes or acceleration. Clearly, then, gifted children's socialization does not suffer the slightest when special provisions are made for their learning needs. Ann Robinson advises parents and educators to speak plainly on the issue of cooperative learning as therapy for socially maladjusted, talented students. The assumption that gifted children are more likely than others to have a variety of personal and social problems is not supported in the literature. Thus, the pill of cooperative learning may be prescribed for a perfectly healthy patient. (A. Robinson, 1990, p. 35)

Up to this point we have been addressing primarily the issue of socialization. According to the dictionary, socialization is the ability to adapt to the needs of the group. Gifted children are very adaptable, particularly girls. But at what price? If one works very hard at fitting in with others, especially when one feels very different from others, self-alienation can result. And this is exactly what we find in so many "well adjusted" gifted youth and adults. In their desperation to

belong, they have given up or lost touch with vital parts of themselves.

Social development, on the other hand, is not the pressure to adapt, but a deep, comfortable level of self-acceptance that leads to true friendships with others.

Lasting friendships are based on mutual interests and values, not on age. Individuals with good social development like themselves, like other people, demonstrate concern for humanity, and develop mutually rewarding friendships with a few kindred spirits. Social development goes hand in hand with self-actualization, whereas socialization is merely the desire to conform – often the opposite of self-actualization. The research indicates that special provisions for the gifted foster good social development (Silverman, 1993); this, rather than fitting in, should be our aim for them. ■

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BOOK REVIEWS

20 IDEAS FOR TEACHING GIFTED KIDS IN THE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL and 20 MORE IDEAS FOR TEACHING GIFTED KIDS IN THE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Edited by Joel McIntosh

(1992 and 1994 respectively)

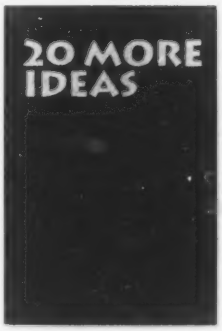
Prufrock Press, paperback, $19.95, 132 pp. and 135 pp.

ISBN 1-882664-05-1 and ISBN 1-882664-15-9

REVIEWED BY MARYANNA GRAY

The back covers of both books describe them as compendiums of information for middle and high school teachers. The description fits perfectly. Not only do the volumes contain proven lessons, they contain articles which focus on important issues in secondary GATE education.

Joel McIntosh, editor of both volumes, has compiled the best articles from the first two years of the *Journal for Secondary Gifted Education*. The volumes offer tested classroom activities proven to work for students in grades 6–12, activities developed by master teachers across the nation. Readers will find many of the ideas directly applicable to their classrooms and others that can be easily adapted. Topics cover science, math, social studies, humanities, language arts, and cross-curricular lessons. Other articles deal with issues facing gifted education in secondary schools. For example, an article by Marsha J. Stephanson entitled "Changing Attitudes" offers an excellent game plan for educating teachers, administrators, counselors, and students. Clearly written, the article is buttressed with research and offers an impressive bibliography.



While it would be impossible in the scope of this review to touch on all the forty ideas, a small sampling will give an idea of the breadth of ideas contained in the volumes. Articles range in content from a lesson involving a field trip to a local cemetery to "Star Struck," an activity for young astronomers. Cross-curricular lessons range from the creation of a college databank to a very interesting unit focusing on our relationship with the Biosphere. More general topics include an article on establishing mentorships and another on creative problem solving.

I have already tried two different activities and found the instructions to be clear and the ideas to be successful. One of these which was based on an article by Joel McIntosh involved the use of SCAMPER. I adapted it to a career unit I was teaching. A second lesson I tried in my own classroom involved suggestions found in Dr. Frederick Coston's article entitled, "Words, Words, Words." My students were fascinated with the etymology of the words suggested by Dr. Coston and it now becomes my task to continue the work.

I recommend these books as valuable additions to both secondary teachers' and coordinators' libraries. The information contained in the books makes them useful to a wide audience and the clarity of the presentations makes them user friendly. ■

MARYANNA GRAY is GATE Coordinator for Santa Barbara High School District in Santa Barbara, CA, and a language arts teacher at La Colina Junior High School.

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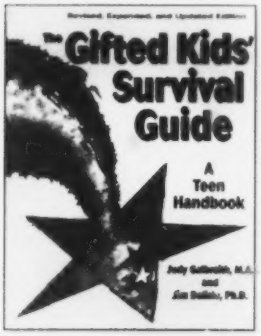
THE GIFTED KIDS' SURVIVAL GUIDE: A TEEN HANDBOOK
by Judy Galbraith & Jim Delisle



(1996) Free Spirit Publishing, paperback, $14.95, 395 pp. ISBN 1-57542-003-1 www.freespirit.com

Readers who have been in the field of gifted education since the mid-1980's will need little introduction to the revised edition of the *Gifted Kids' Survival Guide*, except to be told that it's even better than the original. You will find the same forthright style and lively presentation of facts, step-by-step strategies, practical guidelines, inspiring quotations, and short essays based on information collected from hundreds of gifted teenagers.

In their introduction, authors Galbraith and Delisle state emphatically, "This is not a book *about* gifted young people. It's a book *for* gifted young people." And indeed, the language and content of the book are always directed straight to students. The authors do hope that a lot of teachers and parents will read it as well. Since books for and about gifted children are not usually found in local bookstores, and since students don't often peruse the catalogs in which they're listed, adults will most likely be instrumental in putting the book into the hands of teenage gifted readers.

The authors cover a great variety of topics and issues of interest to gifted young people, including some that adults often shy away from discussing with them. Each topic is presented from a variety of angles and with many modes of expression. For example, the text of the first chapter is devoted to the topic, "On being gifted" and includes the issues of definitions and labeling of giftedness and their inherent problems.

But text alone is not especially appealing to teenagers (or to adults, in fact), so within the 17 pages of the chapter, you will also find:

- a full page cartoon
- quotes—some by gifted education specialists, some by students, and some by celebrities
- a list of 15 people who probably wouldn't have been identified as gifted including Beethoven, Einstein, and Walt Disney
- a chart showing categories of giftedness along with characteristics of each
- "Quick Answers" page
- a sample teacher observation checklist
- a list of "Maddening Myths" related to giftedness
- "Gifted People Speak" - two very short autobiographical accounts

Clearly, the authors have worked hard to include a variety of learning strategies to engage all types of readers.

Other chapter titles include:

- Intelligence
- IQ tests and testing
- Taking charge of your life
- Taking charge of your education
- Relationships
- On being a teenager

There are a lot of quotes in this book. Many are simply sprinkled in the margins or partially take up text space; others are boxed to draw attention to them. Some quotes are from well-known writers, but at least as many are from students themselves—kids talking to kids. One of our favorites is from Bill Cosby who says, "I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody." All are appropriate and related to the topic at hand.

This book is a "must have" for gifted teenagers, their teachers, and parents. Please note that the companion book, *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide For Ages 10 and Under* is also available in a revised and updated edition. ■

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The Middle Years Program for International Baccalaureate

BY BARBARA LATEER

In the shadow of San Jose City Hall sits Burnett Academy, an inner city middle school of 750 students in San Jose Unified School District. Students are bussed from all over this large urban district under the guidelines of a court mandated desegregation effort. The student body reflects ethnic and economic diversity.

A three-year process has resulted in a successful bid to become authorized to teach the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP) at Burnett, the only middle school in northern California teaching the program.

That small sentence does not begin to tell the story of the IBMYP and how it affects the students, staff, and community. Undertaking such a program involves taking many snapshots of past, present, and future practices in order to improve student achievement. It calls for taking a comprehensive look at curriculum and staff development. It requires making a commitment to an integrated curriculum that offers the opportunity to develop sound judgment and make wise choices in a setting that teaches students how to learn and evaluate information critically. It goes beyond the awareness that the business community is demanding that the educational system produce employees with intercultural sensitivity, excellent communication skills, a willingness to continue their academic studies, knowledge of global issues, and an awareness of their social responsibility. It is a transformation of a staff, student body, and community for total commitment to rigorous curriculum and standards on a global scale.

Many educators would like to be part of a system in which the education of its students produces citizens that know how to serve the world community and use a knowledge base to solve problems that are global as well as local in nature. At Burnett Academy we have embraced the vision of the International Baccalaureate Organization, IBO, and taken the journey to bring that vision into reality for our community.

International Baccalaureate Organization Background

There has been much to learn during these three years. We started by getting to know the organization and what it represents. The International Baccalaureate Program has three parts. The Primary Years Program is for ages 3 through 12. The Middle Years Program is a five-year program for grades 6–10. The Diploma Program is for the junior and senior years of high school. Programs are authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), a nonprofit education foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland. It was begun in 1960 to ensure that children of parents in highly mobile professions received a common pre-university education regardless of geographic location. It has expanded to include regional offices and representatives on all the continents. It is truly an international organization.

The Middle Years Program offers "an educational approach that embraces yet transcends traditional school subjects."

Our teachers were trained to embody the unique characteristics of the program within the curriculum and total school offerings. The IBO describes the unique characteristic of the Middle Years Program (MYP) as offering an educational approach that embraces yet transcends traditional school subjects. The curriculum includes all disciplines and integrates them so that the student is presented with a holistic view of knowledge. The social and intellectual development of the adolescent is the focus of the MYP. The common themes embedded within and across the disciplines are:

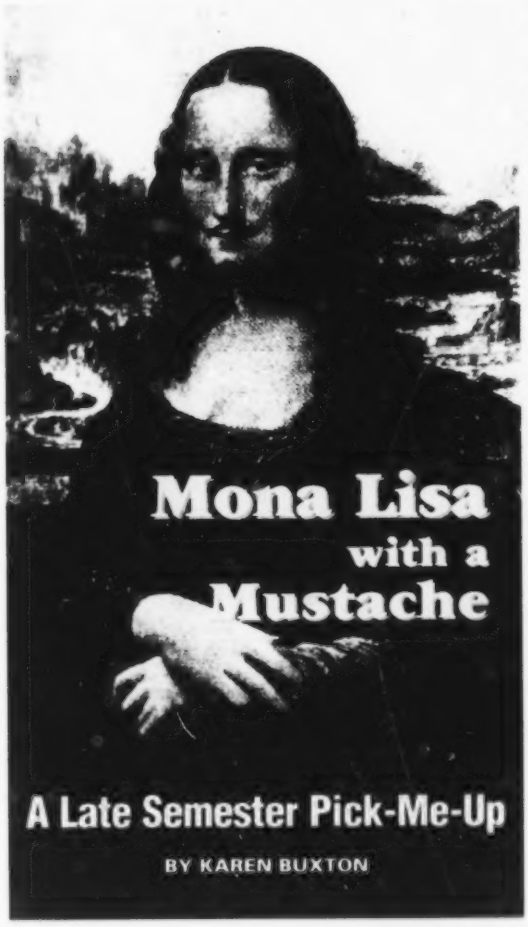
- approaches to learning which concentrate on developing effective study skills
- community service
- health and social education
- environment
- *homo faber* (man the maker, concerned with the products of the creative and inventive genius of people)

Each of these themes is reflected in the teaching strategies and the learning activities for all students.

Student Assessment

Student Assessment is part of the everyday teaching and learning, and is centered in an individual portfolio of achievement. The portfolio has a self-evaluation and the demonstration of the skills acquired and results of achievement in each academic area. A major part of the portfolio is the personal project, a five-year

See BACCALAUREATE, 50



By the time we reach the Renaissance in my seventh grade world history class, the school year is almost gone and teacher and student enthusiasm is waning. This week-long unit, developed collegially with Jill Pease of the Art Education Office of the Sacramento County Office of Education, revives us all. This lesson uses the *Mona Lisa* as an example of the humanistic world outlook that characterizes the Renaissance and follows a textbook lesson on that period of time. In the eighth grade curriculum, Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, the much copied portrait of a farmer, his wife, and his pitchfork, works equally well.

Appropriateness for Gifted Learners

The rigorous and focused thinking that characterizes art criticism and the rich detail and research skills that characterize art history are valuable learning experiences for gifted students. Because art instruction typically focuses on studio art, even students in art classes have little exposure to this mental discipline. This unit demonstrates what teachers of advanced students have always known—"harder" is not synonymous with "grimmer."

This unit of study follows a format developed by Dr. Sandra Kaplan which defines a learning activity as having four components: content, thinking skill, research activity, and student product. Elements of depth and complexity within the content itself provide curriculum differentiation for advanced students.

Collecting Samples

You probably do not have on hand the materials used in this lesson, but copies of works of art can be collected fairly easily if you have access to a networked computer or to art CDs. The serious appropriation* that causes the most consternation among my students is always that of Marcel Duchamp of the Dada school, who painted a realistic Mona Lisa with a mustache and beard.

Collecting commercial Mona Lisa appropriations is easy once you start looking. Have you seen the February 8 issue of *The New Yorker* featuring "Monica Lisa"? The prize of my collection is a picture of a Mona Lisa made from 63 pieces of toasted bread. During this unit, students become engrossed in their attempt to answer the unanswered question: What makes the *Mona Lisa* such a cultural icon?

The Culminating Activity

The culminating studio art activity may seem daunting, but it can be done, even with 160 students a day. Cover desks with newspapers, borrow supplies from the art teacher (borrow the art teacher as well during his/her prep period), enlist adult volunteers, and have a source of water.

It is essential that students spend considerable time sketching with pencils before painting, or the final work will be clumsy and less thoughtful. In addition to the formula aspects of portraiture, provide students with these guidelines:

- Include posed hands
- Make the face fill most of the page (the single biggest problem)
- Incorporate a meaningful background.

The resulting artwork makes a spectacular wall display. Figures 1 and 2 on page 19 illustrate two "Mona's" —unique in style and theme— that

*appropriation is an art education term that refers to an artistic interpretation of a new work in the style of a particular school of art, a specific artist or an individual piece of work.

resulted from this activity. Our "Modern Mona Gallery" was shifted from the classroom to the main hall, so eager were students to have their work admired by a wider audience. ■

KAREN BUXTON is Curriculum Specialist in Language Arts and GATE for the San Juan USD. She is also a member of the faculty for CAG's summer teacher institutes.

Figure 1. Mona Lisa in the style of Calvin & Hobbs

Figure 2. A Star Trek Mona Lisa

Aesthetic Discovery Check List

Title of Work:

Artist:

DESCRIPTION

Describe exactly what you see in this work: a scene, objects, and/or design elements.

ANALYSIS

Sensory Properties

Line (circle those which apply)

- *direction:* vertical, horizontal, diagonal, curved
- *qualities:* thick, thin, smooth, wavy, jagged, graceful, awkward, continuous, interrupted

Shape/Form (circle those which apply)

- geometric, organic (from nature)

Color

- hue (name of colors)
- what color(s) dominate this work?

Texture (circle those which apply)

- smooth, coarse, shiny, dull, hard, soft

Space/Perspective (illusion of three-dimensional space) (circle those which apply)

- overlapping shapes
- linear perspective (objects appear smaller as they recede into space)
- aerial perspective (colors appear softer as they recede into space)
- light/dark (chiaroscuro or tenebrism)

Formal Properties - The organization of elements within a composition

Emphasis - What is the primary focal point?

Balance (circle one) - Symmetrical or Asymmetrical

Movement (circle one) - Dynamic or Static

Rhythm - Elements of motifs which are repeated? Varied?

Unity - How does the artist unify the work?

Technical Properties

- What media has the artist used?
- Is there evidence of some of the tools used?
- Does the choice of materials enhance the subject or ideas which the artist is communicating?

Expressive Properties

- What feelings do you experience when viewing this work?
- Do these feelings relate to the humanistic ideas typical of the Renaissance?

Lesson Plan

Mona Lisa

Content Activity Differentiated for Depth & Complexity	Higher Level Thinking Skill	Research	Product
DAY 1			
Students consider the *Mona Lisa* as an illustration of fine art and as an example of the humanistic values of the Renaissance: • note detail (depth) • pose unanswered questions for future research (depth) • recognize the criteria used to understand art (rules)	• Analyze • Recognize attributes • Judge based on criteria	Careful observation of a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*	Completion of Aesthetic Discovery Check List (see p. 19)
Guiding Questions: • Referring to sensory, formal, and technical properties, how did the artist communicate ideas or feelings through this work? • How were these ideas typical of Renaissance humanism?			
DAY 2			
In groups of four, students read and discuss one of eight articles related to the *Mona Lisa* and then briefly present their article to the class: • discern point of view (complexity) • summarize (details and patterns) • note differences in historical accounts (complexity)	• Determine bias • Note ambiguity arising from conflicting information	Reading of one of eight separate articles, ranging in difficulty levels for heterogeneous classes. Art texts and periodicals (especially *Art News*) are rich sources of articles, as is the Internet.	Three-minute small group summary presentations
Guiding Questions: • Did your research help answer any of yesterday's questions? • Why are there discrepancies among our sources? • How should a researcher resolve these discrepancies?			

Lesson Plan

Content Activity Differentiated for Depth & Complexity	Higher Level Thinking Skill	Research	Product
DAY 3 & 4			
Students differentiate between commercial and serious appropriations of daVinci's *Mona Lisa* and then investigate one serious appropriation: • formulate possible interpretations of a work of art (details, ethics, unanswered questions, different perspectives) • modify interpretations with information about artist/period (trends, change over time)	• Compare and contrast • Judge with criteria • Classify • Interpret • Hypothesize	Observation of commercial appropriations (t-shirts, advertisements, salt and pepper shakers, etc.), and serious appropriations with interpretive information on the artist/period: • Andy Warhol, *Mona Lisa* • Robert Rauschenberg, *Mona Lisa* • Jean Baptiste Corot, *Woman with a Pearl* • Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.* • Marisol, *Mona Lisa*	Reach consensus on where to place a variety of Mona Lisa appropriations on a continuum from crass rip-offs to museum quality fine art. Write a newspaper review comparing and contrasting a Mona Lisa appropriation with the original.
Guiding Questions: • What's the difference between commercial and serious appropriations of daVinci's *Mona Lisa*? • How has your artist changed daVinci's original painting? • What meaning does the original Mona Lisa have within your new work of art? • What is the meaning of your appropriation? Does the title of your work give a clue to its meaning?			
DAY 5			
After considering the essential qualities of the Mona Lisa, students design and paint their own "Modern Mona's" • note common features used in *Mona Lisa* appropriations, e.g., smile, hand placement (pattern) • select specific aesthetic elements to convey a particular message (details, pattern, ethics)	• Determine relevance • See relationships • Recognize attributes	Observation of daVinci's *Mona Lisa* Observation of daVinci's drawing of the ideal face, noting similarities with contemporary instructions for portraits (e.g., eyebrows on line with tops of ears)	Reproduction of an original appropriation of the *Mona Lisa* using poster paint
Guiding Questions: • How can you recognize a Mona Lisa appropriation? Why is she so often "appropriated"? • What's the message of your modern Mona?			

SUPER SENTENCES

A delightful way to challenge young wordmongers

BY CAROL ANN TOMLINSON

A couple of years ago, I was walking toward my office at the university when I felt a tap on my shoulder. As I turned, a broad smile met me. The face was familiar—but changed, as is often the case when you've taught seventh grade and met a student a decade or so hence! "Mrs. T!" he exclaimed, "I was passing through Charlottesville and I saw your license tag in the parking lot. I had to come tell you I can still say all the super sentences! Every one of them!" To prove it, he began. "The precipitous incline of the tortuous cliff rendered dubious their unhampered descent." Another smile, "See?" he said, and rattled off another one.

The Birth of an Idea

Like many good teaching strategies, the birth of super sentences in my classroom was serendipitous, and followed the lead of the kids. Here's how they were born.

An advocate of humor as a tool for guiding student behavior, I quipped to a chatty fella one day, "Brad, you surely are inebriated with the exuberance of your verbosity today!" His eyebrows raised, the chatter stopped. I moved on. At the end of class, however, Brad came to me and said, "Say that again."

"What?" I had forgotten what I'd said to him.

"You know. The sentence with the big words."

"Oh," I recalled, and I repeated it. "Tell me what it means," Brad laughed.

"Not on your life," I smiled. "It's your sentence. You figure it out." I wrote it on a hall pass and slid it across the desk to him.

"Okay," he said. "I will."

And he did. By the end of lunch, he and two friends were walking up to peers in the hall and casually saying, "Hey, did anybody ever tell you you're inebriated with the exuberance of your verbosity?" Nearly all the recipients were impressed. One girl cried. By the next morning, I'd heard the line in three classes.

As Brad left class that day, he said, "Give me another one of those sentences."

I was stuck, I'd given him the only one I knew and I knew it only because my own 9th grade English teacher used to say it to us. Never one to squelch student interest, however, I smiled and said, "You bet! Come by on your way to lunch and I'll have one for you."

I made up another doozie. Brad came for it. He and his lunch buddies translated it, learned it and shared it like new found wealth.

After Brad's fourth "learning cycle," I thought to myself, "These kids are learning pretty substantial vocabulary, begging for more, and loving it," And I realized I needed to switch the process from an "extracurricular" pursuit to a core part of our language arts curriculum. Super sentences were born and had a long and happy life in our world.

The Way They Worked

Here's how we worked with super sentences.

- I'd create two super sentences. (Later, students developed them too and proposed them for our study.) Because my classes were academically diverse, I'd create one sentence for students whose forte was not vocabulary, and a more complex one for the wordmongers among us like Brad. It's important to note that even the less challenging sentences were plenty challenging. In fact, the "precipitous incline" sentence first spouted by my thirty-something former student was the "easier" of two sentences in a set. The words sometimes came from books we were reading, sometimes from vocabulary texts or lists, and sometimes from my head—I'm a wordmonger too.

- I'd put the two sentences on the board where they'd stay for a couple of weeks. On the day we began working on a set of super sentences, students carefully

"The precipitous incline of the tortuous cliff rendered dubious their unhampered descent."

copied the sentences they were assigned into a notebook. Then each person checked someone else's sentence to make sure it was right.

- Each student worked with a dictionary to "translate" his or her sentence into a smooth version a 4th grader could understand. (That's not easy, given multiple dictionary definitions, suffixes, etc.) Further, each student had to be able to give a clear, brief definition of each underlined word in the sentence—tough words that I had underlined. Ultimately, students worked in pairs or threes to smooth out their proposed translations. Finally, we'd go over translations and definitions as a whole class so that everyone was comfortable with the outcome.

- The next day, I'd begin class—maybe for 10 minutes—by asking a couple of students to volunteer to read each sentence, and we'd work on pronunciation. We'd then choral read the sentences a couple of times. A student or two would offer their translations, and I'd ask about individual words with questions such as, "Who can tell us what precipitous means? Who knows a synonym for incline?"

- We'd follow this format each day for a few minutes for about 8–10 days. In that time, I'd begin to ask the students to choral speak the sentences with their eyes closed, and to translate or define with no notebooks. We never made a big deal out of memorizing the sentences. It just happened. The rhythm of the words did it for us.

- When it was time for a test, I'd leave the current sentences on the board and circle several words in each. Students had to copy their sentences perfectly, define each circled word, and write a smooth and appropriate translation for their sentences.

- While each student was assigned one of the two sentences, they'd spent days hearing both sentences, choral speaking both, listening to translations and definitions of both, and so on. Therefore, they were encouraged to define any words they could from "the other" sentence, and translate it if they could. The typical pattern was that the wordmongers had both sentences down pat. Virtually all other students could do some or even much, of "the other" sentence.

- Then a new pair of super sentences would go on the blackboard and the cycle would begin again. An important facet of the new cycle, however, was that we'd always review all past super sentences—reciting, defining, translating, as we learned the new ones. On each subsequent test, newly assigned sentences were required. "Old" ones were encouraged and always tackled with gusto by most comers from memory!

"The prodigious prestidigitator purloined the prestige of the pulchritudinous psychic by prognosticating through a presentiment the popular proclivities for the preeminent political pursuant."

Why They Worked

Kids who never liked vocabulary loved super sentences. The wordmongers were in heaven. The success rate was high. Retention was amazing. (Compare that to the list-a-week approach.) There were a number of reasons why super sentences were a winner. Among those reasons are the following:

- The words were in a context, which gave them meaning, and "clues" compared to the isolation of random lists.
- The level of difficulty of the sentence was appropriately challenging for the learner.
- There were oral and visual components to the learning process.
- Repetition over time made a huge difference.
- The sentences were fun. We laughed as we learned.
- Kids helped one another succeed.
- All students got bonuses for extending their learning.

For students whose strength was language, the opportunity for word play and growth was limitless. Sentences could be long, puns, alliterative, theme-based, and so on. Their vocabulary was well beyond grade expectations—and joyful.

If "The precipitous incline of the tortuous cliff rendered dubious their unhampered descent" was the easier sentence in a seventh grade super sentence pair, what might a more advanced super sentence look like?

Well, my thirty-something former student—by then, the dad of a young adolescent himself—remembered those super sentences too. I joined him in laughing and reciting, "The prodigious prestidigitator purloined the prestige of the pulchritudinous psychic by prognosticating through a presentiment the popular proclivities for the preeminent political pursuant." ■

DR. CAROL ANN TOMLINSON is an Associate Professor at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She was a major speaker at the recent CAG conference in Santa Clara.

HANDS-ON CURRICULUM

How To Do Real Research

BY SHIRLEY PATCH

To reinforce the research skills taught during their National History Day and Project Citizen investigations, my students are asked to create a one-page brochure that will explain appropriate research procedure and concepts to incoming students the following year. To illustrate the complexity of a research project, the brochure must include the use of an analogy.

Lesson Design

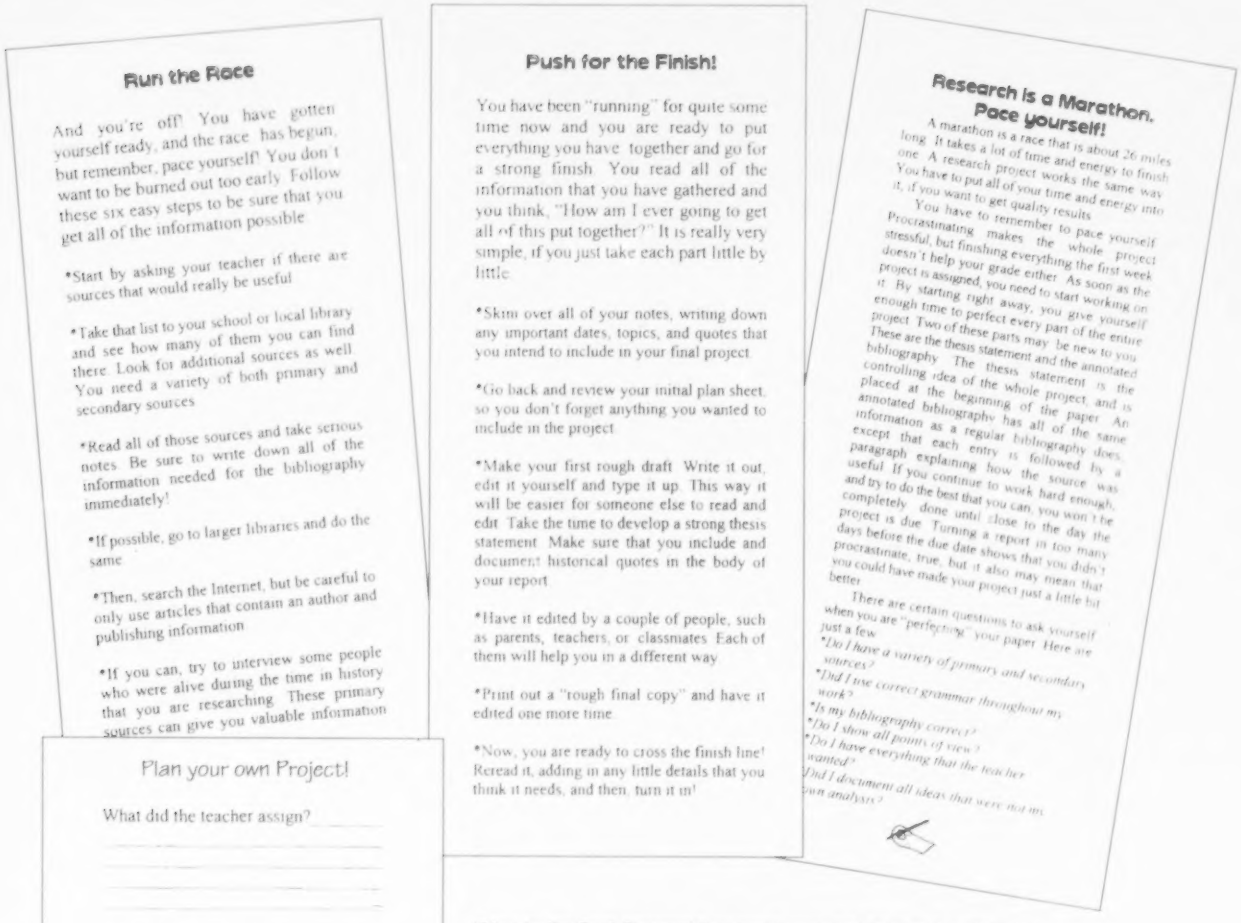
The lesson begins with a review discussion of the most important ideas students have learned in the process of completing a research project. Next, students create a graphic organizer, such as a flow chart or a mapping device, which depicts the major components of research project techniques and contents.

Students outline the topics they think will be most beneficial to new students who have never created a documented research project before. An analogy is then developed to guide their explanation of research methodology, and a draft of a brochure is designed by hand. Students are given computer access time to search for illustrations using Clip Art, Corel, and other resources. Finally, they use available technology programs such as Claris Works, Pagemaker, My Color Marketing Materials, and Publisher '98 to produce a published brochure.

The published student brochures are used to assist students new to advanced research techniques.

SHIRLEY PATCH teachers at Andrew Carnegie Middle School in Orangeville, CA.

HOW TO DO REAL RESEARCH
It's a marathon!
The three steps of any project:
Prepare yourself.
Run the race.
Push for the finish.
Running a marathon is used as the analogy
Graphic elements enhance the design of the brochure and reinforce the analogy
Subheads use vocabulary related to the analogy. Related vocabulary is also sprinkled judiciously within the text of the brochure
Each of the brochure's six panels provide research tips
Prepare Yourself
If you were going to run a marathon, which is a 26-mile race, it would take a lot of preparation, training, and planning. The same amount of work is needed to prepare for a research project. You can't go out and expect that the good sources will be right there waiting for you to pick them up. Here are some tips to help you plan for all of the work that lies ahead.
*Reread what the teacher assigned and/or any rules that you must follow.
*Write down and answer: What is my final goal? How do I want this research project to turn out?
*Create a time line that includes check points, or specific dates by which you need to have certain parts of your project done.
*Get an overview of your subject out of the encyclopedia, but do not include it in your paper or bibliography.
*Borrow a research manual from the library that you will closely follow throughout your project. Two manuals to look for are A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations by Kate L. Turabian and the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers edited by Joseph Gibaldi. They will show you the exact format for the body of your report, bibliography, and footnotes.
Follow these steps, and you will have taken your first "stride" to a strong finish!



Run the Race

And you're off! You have gotten yourself ready, and the race has begun, but remember, pace yourself! You don't want to be burned out too early. Follow these six easy steps to be sure that you get all of the information possible.

*Start by asking your teacher if there are sources that would really be useful.

*Take that list to your school or local library and see how many of them you can find there. Look for additional sources as well. You need a variety of both primary and secondary sources.

*Read all of those sources and take serious notes. Be sure to write down all of the information needed for the bibliography immediately!

*If possible, go to larger libraries and do the same.

*Then, search the Internet, but be careful to only use articles that contain an author and publishing information.

*If you can, try to interview some people who were alive during the time in history that you are researching. These primary sources can give you valuable information.

Push for the Finish!

You have been "running" for quite some time now and you are ready to put everything you have together and go for a strong finish. You read all of the information that you have gathered and you think, "How am I ever going to get all of this put together?" It is really very simple, if you just take each part little by little.

*Skim over all of your notes, writing down any important dates, topics, and quotes that you intend to include in your final project.

*Go back and review your initial plan sheet, so you don't forget anything you wanted to include in the project.

*Make your first rough draft. Write it out, edit it yourself and type it up. This way it will be easier for someone else to read and edit. Take the time to develop a strong thesis statement. Make sure that you include and document historical quotes in the body of your report.

*Have it edited by a couple of people, such as parents, teachers, or classmates. Each of them will help you in a different way.

*Print out a "rough final copy" and have it edited one more time.

*Now, you are ready to cross the finish line! Reread it, adding in any little details that you think it needs, and then, turn it in!

Research is a Marathon. Pace yourself!

A marathon is a race that is about 26 miles long. It takes a lot of time and energy to finish one. A research project works the same way. You have to put all of your time and energy into it, if you want to get quality results.

You have to remember to pace yourself. Procrastinating makes the whole project stressful, but finishing everything the first week doesn't help your grade either. As soon as the project is assigned, you need to start working on it. By starting right away, you give yourself enough time to perfect every part of the entire project. Two of these parts may be new to you. These are the thesis statement and the annotated bibliography. The thesis statement is the controlling idea of the whole project, and is placed at the beginning of the paper. An annotated bibliography has all of the same information as a regular bibliography does, except that each entry is followed by a paragraph explaining how the source was useful. If you continue to work hard enough, and try to do the best that you can, you won't be completely done until close to the day the project is due. Turning a report in too many days before the due date shows that you didn't procrastinate, true, but it also may mean that you could have made your project just a little bit better.

There are certain questions to ask yourself when you are "perfecting" your paper. Here are just a few.

*Do I have a variety of primary and secondary sources?

*Did I use correct grammar throughout my work?

*Is my bibliography correct?

*Do I show all points of view?

*Do I have everything that the teacher wanted?

*Did I document all ideas that were not my own analysis?

Plan your own Project!

What did the teacher assign?

Topics and/or rules

Final goal and due date

Goals along the way

Time line

Research Vocabulary

Annotation: *part of a bibliography that tells how the source was helpful to you.*

Primary Source: *a first hand account of the piece of history.*

Secondary Source: *information that is not fictional, but not a first hand account either.*

Footnote: *documentation at the bottom of a page showing from where your ideas came.*

Theses Statement: *statement at the beginning showing what is written in the paper.*

brochure designed by Amanda Johnson

"How to Do Real Research" example was designed and written by AMANDA JOHNSON. She was 12-years-old and in the 7th grade when she created her brochure using the analogy of running a marathon.

How To Do Real Research Analogies

Here are some other analogies that Patch's students have used to create their research brochures.

- Solving an equation
- A roller coaster ride
- A metamorphosis
- Programming a computer
- Gourmet cooking
- The Americas Cup race
- Climbing Mount Everest
- The Super Bowl
- Drawing a comic strip
- Launching a rocket
- Spring cleaning
- Charity fundraiser

72BEST COPY AVAILABLE

DILEMMAS IN TALENTED DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE GRADES: TWO VIEWS

Edited by Thomas Erb with chapters by Paul George, Joseph Renzulli & Sally Reis

(1997) National Middle School Association
paperback, $25.00, 193 pp, ISBN 1-56090-123-3
www.nmsa.org

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS BY MARGARET GOSFIELD

Note While the writer is also the editor of the Communicator, this analysis was written as an individual and not as a representative of the California Association for the Gifted. To the best of the this writer's knowledge, members of CAG's Board of Directors are not generally familiar with this publication, and they certainly have not taken a position on its contents. It did seem appropriate, however, that the views of middle school leaders regarding services to advanced learners be included in this special issue featuring gifted education in middle schools.*

In his introductory remarks, editor Erb prepares us for a provocative reading experience. In his words:

> Whether you are a middle school advocate or an advocate for the gifted, you will not be able to read this volume without having an emotional as well as an intellectual reaction. This book is not a tepid attempt to patch over different views of how to develop the gifts and talents of middle school learners. (p.6)

How right he was!

The second chapter is written by middle school proponent and critic of gifted education, Paul George, followed by a chapter written by Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis as advocates for gifted and talented education. After these chapters had been written, the authors exchanged papers to give them the opportunity to respond to one another. Chapters four and five consist of those responses, with a final chapter by Dr. Erb. This point/counterpoint presentation is very effective, as both authors and readers have the opportunity to examine and respond to points made in the early chapters.

George Attacks

The real opening salvo comes in chapter two written by Dr. Paul George, a member of the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Florida. He has specialized in middle school education, instructional grouping, and Japanese education. With this background, he surely has the experience to speak on the topic. Dr.George states immediately, however, that he intends to take aim at gifted education and blast away with both barrels. In his words:

> Hence, what follows is intended to be just that—as complete a catalog of criticisms and concerns about the current status of gifted education and the middle school as can be mustered, delivered in the belief that this sort of ventilation is an unpleasant but necessary part of the process of reconciliation. (p.9)

He does express hopefulness that such a confrontation will bring greater and more accurate understanding, leading to better schools for all middle school students. There is little encouragement, however, in that he invariably refers to those in gifted education as "advocates"—often used as a negative term—while those in middle school leadership are always called "educators."

George presents and develops four propositions:

PROPOSITION ONE

There is no hard evidence to suggest that gifted and talented (GT) students cannot have virtually all of their reasonable academic needs met in the context of the regular classroom. (p.11)

> There is no evidence whatsoever of a decline in test scores in American schools, yet advocates of the gifted often claim that the regular classroom has become such a poor learning environment that GT students should be withdrawn and isolated from the general populations. Such programs proliferate in American school districts on the assumption that the regular classroom is no longer suitable for GT students. (p.13)

George states that in spite of governmental and other reports in the media, regular classrooms are as good or better than ever and refers to the Sandia National Laboratory Report (1992) as his evidence. George claims furthermore, that the "advocates" for gifted education have used the media reports to sup-

See ANALYSIS, 52

Student CHALLENGE Center

In this issue we've got two challenges for you: "Dr. B's Sidebar Science" on page 29 and "Vive Le Moustache!" on this page.

Send your submissions with an entry form to:

Debra Johnson
Associate Editor for Youth
3425 Santa Cruz Drive
Riverside, CA 92507
E-mail: DebJoAnn@aol.com

Entries for challenges from this issue (spring 1999) must be received no later than July 20, 1999 to be considered for publication.

STUDENT CHALLENGE ENTRY FORM

Name

Age Grade

Address

City State Zip

Teacher's name

Name of School

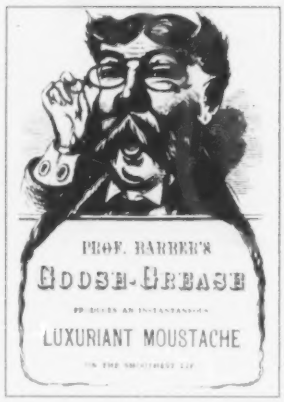
School District

I certify that the submission is original and created by the student.

Student signature

Parent signature

Vive Le Moustache!



Men wear moustaches (or mustaches) for many reasons. Some want to save time by not shaving. Others think a beard makes them more handsome. Some may wear a beard to keep warm in winter.

Kings, emperors, presidents and other leaders wore beards and mustaches which were copied and adapted by the general population. In some societies, beards and mustaches designated class status or ethnic origin. Even women have been know to disguise themselves with a mustache or beard. Try one or more of the following:

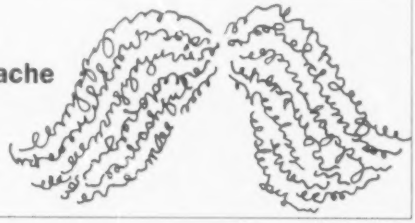
- Design an original mustache (or snap some photos of real people with mustaches) and give it a name. "Handlebars" were trendy in the 1920s.
- Design a mustache for a famous individual that personifies his or her personality or occupation.
- Create a mustache that's not only unique but also utilitarian.
- Create a gallery with pictures or photos of people with mustaches.
- Think of as many different or unusual uses for mustaches as you can. Then draw an original cartoon to illustrate your most interesting idea.

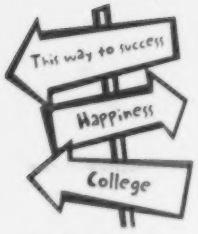
Send in your entries with a Challenge Entry Form. The best will be published in the fall issues of the *Communicator* and will receive a $25 gift certificate from Barnes & Noble.

PUZZLER

This is a mustache for "Doc."

Can you figure out why?





Goal Setting Survey For Middle School Students

BY DEBRA JOHNSON

When you travel to unfamiliar places, it is wise to have a road map to plot your course or destination. A map helps you turn at the right places and avoid getting lost. The future is another unfamiliar place that many people move straight into without charting a course or having a map to guide the way. But if you set future goals, you'll have a map to guide you in making the right choices and helps avoid those life experiences that will only delay your arrival at your destination.

Complete the following survey to find out how much you know about setting goals for your life. Then tally your score and match it to the description provided at the end of the survey. You can find a guide for developing your own personal goals and a plan for your future on page 29.

Check only one response for each statement.	Yes	No	Sort of	Never thought about it
1. I have a personal definition of success.				
2. I know what truly makes me happy in life.				
3. I daydream often about my future life.				
4. I have a strong desire to succeed in all that I do.				
5. I know what I want to be doing 3–5 years from now.				
6. I make a list every day of tasks I want to accomplish.				
7. I am committed to being a lifelong learner.				
8. I know what I want to major in when I go to college.				
9. I have researched various careers to find what interests me.				
10. I always keep my options open.				

Scoring: 4 points for each YES, 3 for each NO, 2 for SORT OF and 1 for NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT

Now add-up your score and record it here: _____

Results of Goal Setting Survey

If you scored between:

85 - 100 points
You have a chart plotted for your future. You know what you need to do to reach your goals in life and have possibly even begun your journey. If you haven't already done so, it will be helpful to keeping you on course to write down your goals and keep a journal or portfolio of your progress. Remember they are your goals. They can be revised at any time you choose.

70 - 84 points
You have done some thinking about your future, but you haven't settled on any particular plan. You have several interests and it is difficult for you to narrow the possibilities. This is good. The more interests you have the more choices you have. But it is better to focus on becoming an expert in one or two areas. If you don't focus on something, you may never reach your destination. Also remember, once one goal is reached, it becomes easier to reach others.

30 - 69 points
Setting goals for the future is something that really appeals to you, but you need some guidance. It is something that you have never really put as a priority. Maybe now is the time. Use the goal setting activity that follows the survey to begin plotting a successful chart for your future.

0 - 29 points
You haven't been thinking about the future much at all. Well, maybe you have, but only on a day-to-day basis. To help you move into the future more prepared, begin now by completing the goal setting activity on page 29.

Chart Your Course

A Goal Setting Activity

Step 1: Think about yourself. Write down some things that make you happy.

Step 2: Write your definition of success. Success means different things to different people. Does success mean money, security, helping others, prestige, family, improving the environment, solving problems, a career, or a degree?

Step 3: Whatever your definition of success is, the key to success lies in your ability to strengthen your desire to succeed. Write the steps you need to take in order to succeed according to your definition of success. List some people you know who could help in your quest for success.

Step 4: Think about where you would like to be in 3–5 years from now. What would you like to be doing? Next, outline the major steps necessary to put yourself there.

Step 5: Now that you have a future plan, it is important to focus on the present time. List all of the specific things you want to accomplish today at school and in your personal life. List only those things that are possible or realistic for you. At the end of the day, evaluate your progress. How did you do? Repeat this step each day keeping your future plan in mind at all times.

The following goals are applicable to everyone:

1. Become a lifelong learner. Education is the key to opportunity and allows us to keep up with our ever-changing world.
2. Establish clear education plans. Not everyone knows what they want their major to be in college. Some people do not make this decision until after they have entered college. Visiting a career counseling center, talking to your teachers and parents, and researching various careers are some of the ways you can begin to find your direction.
3. Become an efficient, successful student and always put forth your best efforts. Develop good study and health habits. Don't look for the easy way to do things, but challenge yourself to follow the path that requires you to travel beyond your present limits.

If you have any goal-setting tips that you would like to share with other middle school students, please send them to :

Debra Johnson, Associate Youth Editor

California Association for the Gifted

3425 Santa Cruz Drive

Riverside, California 92507

You will be notified if your tips are selected for publication.

Dr. B's Side Bar Science

We can all relate to Dr. B's latest challenge:

"Why do beans give us gas?"

Creative entries obviously are winners, but don't forget—you also must give a scientific explanation. Mail in your entry with a Student Challenge form.

Kids, want to get TECH-nical?

Try this website:

www.toonacat.com/kids/index.html

If you want to post your story, poetry, or other creative endeavors visit this site.There is opportunity to join ToonaCat's Kids Club, The Creative Place for Kids, download a crossword puzzle, ask questions, read stories, and link to other sites. The site has a message to kids to always check with a trusted adult before sending any information to someone on the Internet and states that it "tries very hard to maintain a safe web page."

Barnes & Noble

The Student Challenge Center is sponsored by the Encino office of Barnes & Noble Bookstore. Look for the first challenge winners in the summer (July) issue of the Communicator.

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Book Reviews

Cyber.Kdz: 3 The Great NASA Flu

By Bruce Balan
(1997) Avon Books paperback, $3.99, 162 pp.
ISBN 0-380-78516-1

REVIEWED BY ANDY JOHNSON

Deeder is the focal point of *The Great NASA Flu*. He is a hacker from the Netherlands. However, he is not some sort of scum like the hackers who mess with data. No, Deeder just likes to explore the Net, searching for viruses to kill. For Deeder, it is like a game, one where he works to see what he can see while not touching anything. Suddenly it is no longer a game. When Deeder's father, a brilliant artificial intelligence programmer, is called to the Kennedy Space Center to work on a program to launch the space shuttle, Deeder is allowed to go because it is only for the summer. However, when the program is finally complete, it goes wacko and the shuttle launch is aborted. Deeder's father is blamed and he almost loses his job. Deeder is convinced that it wasn't his dad's fault, and that some scum planted a deadly virus in the A.I. program. Now Deeder, with the help of key pals, Sanjeev in India, Tereza in Brazil, and Josh in New York is setting out to prove that his dad was framed, and to uncover the power-hungry corporation that is responsible. It all adds up to a deadly race to kill the virus before it kills the space shuttle.

I quite enjoyed this book as well as its perspective on the Internet. *Cyber.kdz 3: The Great NASA Flu* is acceptable reading for kids ages 10 through 14, although I believe those 12 and 13 will enjoy it the most. Anyone who enjoys teen mysteries or cyberspace books will definitely like this one, and anyone whose computer has been hit by a virus will be able to relate. Overall, this was a great book, and one of the best I have seen in its genre.

ANDY JOHNSON is an eighth grader attending La Colina Junior High School in Santa Barbara, CA.

Cyber.Kdz: 5 In Pursuit of Picasso

By Bruce Balan
(1998) Avon Books paperback, $3.99, 145 pp.
ISBN 0-380-79499-3

REVIEWED BY MATT LEBOURVEAU

If the action and mystery stops, you are not reading *Cyber Kdz: In Pursuit of Picasso* by Bruce Balan. For those new to the series, these books are about a group of international kids who, online, are the Cyber Kdz. Online chatting between these kids is interesting because of the different languages used and the techno-talk. Fifth in the series, this book is about the journey of a tech nomad through Europe named Steve Roberts. Steve's bicycle is named Behemoth (which stands for Big Electronic Human-Energized Machine. Only Too Heavy). Behemoth weighs 580 pounds and features solar cells, three computers, GPS, a talking theft alarm, and 105 gears. One might describe Behemoth as not only interesting but unique.

Steve's tech nomad travels are interrupted when he receives a plea for help from one of the Cyber Kdz, Loren Jouet from France. For decades, the belief that Loren's uncle Pierre stole eleven original art pieces by Picasso, Miro, and Dali has damaged his uncle's, Loren's and Loren's family's reputation. However, after finding new evidence, Loren believes he can locate the paintings and save his uncle's as well as his own reputation and name. When Loren asks Steve to recover the paintings, his request draws the attention of others who seem to want the paintings enough to kill.

With more twists and turns than the French Alps Steve rides over, *In Search of Picasso* is exciting and fun to read. Easy explanations of difficult terms and online chatting in the book help the reader to feel like one of the cyber Kdz.

[Matt has logged off]

MATT LEBOURVEAU is an eighth grader attending La Colina Junior High School in Santa Barbara, CA.

A Little Pre-Assessment Goes A Long Way

BY STEVE KAHL

Imagine the reputation of a physician who prescribed the same medication for all of her patients. Regardless of the symptoms various patients presented, the doctor sent them all to a pharmacist for penicillin. Why bother with any individual diagnosis if all patients can benefit from a course of antibiotics? After all, office visits are time consuming and cumbersome. Of course, such a doctor would be sued for malpractice, and rightly so.

Similarly, however, many well-intentioned teachers outline their course curricula without diagnosing the academic needs of their students. Middle school, high school, and college educators regularly duplicate their first-semester assignment sheets in the summer, without assessing readiness, interests, and learning profiles of their new students.

As a result, many educators at all grade levels aim for the middle pin as they would while bowling, hoping to reach all students, but often discovering the limitations of such an approach. In such a situation, gifted students may lose interest in school altogether while enduring another year of unchallenging curriculum. Overwhelmed students may give up attempting to complete grade level assignments for which they lack adequate preparation.

Indeed, as gifted education expert Barbara Clark has noted, we tend to enroll students in courses based upon their birth year. At the elementary level many children are not ready for kindergarten at the same age. Class assignments at middle and high school are based on the age of the student. At a typical high school, for example, all freshmen enroll in Algebra 1, or higher, ready or not. All sophomores enroll in World History. Within most sections of those courses, teachers require all students do the same assignments in the same way, often in the name of equity.

Kahl doesn't start teaching until he gets to know his kids. During the first days of class, his students document their accomplishments, interests, and learning styles.

Teachers who differentiate the curriculum, however, have a different definition for equity. Differentiation encompasses giving each student an appropriate academic challenge based on pre-assessment at the beginning of the year as well as at the start of each unit of instruction. To do this for 120–150 students, the typical number for which a secondary teacher is responsible, requires organization and some techniques to develop a student profile. This article will show how to quickly develop a student profile.

Before planning a year's curriculum, it is important to verify students' academic readiness levels and interests. Over the years, I have assembled a number of reliable pre-assessment activities—as well as classroom management exercises—designed to set the stage for ongoing differentiation of the curriculum.

Setting the Tone

From the first day of class, students are arranged in an alphabetical seating chart , A to Z from left to right. This allows me to get to know their names more quickly. It also keeps students from sitting with their buddies. After I learn their names, I adjust the seating chart to support the students' various learning needs as they become apparent.

On the first day of school, I do not lecture the students about my expectations and I do not pass out a syllabus or course outline. Instead, I ask the students to write silently about the best class of their lives. I give them questions to help focus their thoughts on positive student conduct such as, "How did the students conduct themselves in this 'best class of their lives' to help make it such a great class?"

On the second day of class I ask students, one at a time, to name examples of positive student conduct. These examples are written on the overhead as each student shares it from the written paper. Once the positive conduct statements have been collected on a central list, I ask the students if any of them would dislike being in a class where students act in the ways they have listed. No one ever raises a hand. Together, we decide that these are the standards of conduct to which they will be held accountable in my class. On the next day each student receives a typed rubric form, outlining these standards. (See Figure 1, p. 33)

Collecting Vital Statistics

Obtaining information in a quick and efficient manner is a key to getting started. I ask students to complete a brief information card on the second day of class. Using 5x8 index cards, color coded by class, students are asked to list the following: name and address; parents' names, jobs, phone numbers, and availability; the names of their last four English teachers; their curricular and extracurricular interests and activities; their membership in various academic programs and other groups; and the grade they intend to earn in the class. This information can be tailored to any class depending on the age group.

To round out the background information, students take a learning style quiz, and write the results on the back of the card. They are also asked to identify which of Gardner's intelligences is their strongest or weakest. Many students may need a quick review of Gardner's work to assist them in making this decision.

Creating the Pre-Assessment Portfolio

For homework, students assemble a portfolio of their greatest works, including their best essay, poem, short story, and one other wild card piece of writing. The portfolio must include a table of contents and an introduction to each writing sample.

Perhaps the most powerful item in the portfolio is each student's self-assessment, expressed in a collection of short narratives and also on a corresponding graph. On the third day of class, students are asked to complete a graph that demonstrates their various competencies in the language arts. Along the horizontal axis of the graph are listed the skills and values that will be emphasized in English class. These include reading comprehension, oral reading, analysis of literature, essay writing, poetry writing, fiction writing, grammar/mechanics, discussion, debate, speech, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and work ethic.

Along the vertical axis of the graph are terms which indicate the student's degree of competence in each of the above items. The terms are arranged in ascending order and expressed as: not yet skilled, somewhat skilled, skilled, and highly skilled. For each skill, the student assesses personal strength by placing a dot on the graph. Once all the dots have been marked, the student connects the dots with lines to complete the graph. (See Figure 2, p. 33)

The student then writes at least one paragraph for each skill, explaining his strengths and weaknesses in that area. This activity culminates in a letter to me explaining everything the student thinks I need to know in order to teach him effectively. This gives me a great deal of information about the student's thinking, reading, and writing skills. I keep this portfolio throughout the year, using it to modify lessons and activities for various levels of readiness and interest.

On the day the students turn in their portfolios, a ten minute block of time is given to a competition to see who has read the most books. Students write down their book titles and the one with the largest number receives a prize. These papers are also included in the portfolios and provide information about what students read and how often they read.

Personal Museums

On the next day, I model my own personal museum for the students. This is a collection of five to ten items that embody my interests, values, and accomplishments. As both curator and docent for my museum, I explain each item in the exhibit, offering concluding remarks about my identity. I then assign the students to create and exhibit their own personal museums over the next two days. During the presentations, their interests, accomplishments, family life, and personality are noted either in their portfolios or on the backs of their information cards.

An alternative assignment with similar effectiveness is to have the students create colorful, image-laden timelines illustrating the ten most crucial events of their lives. As they share these large visual aids with the class, useful information is noted.

Acknowledgement Circle

Another strategy is to have students take part in a circle of acknowledgement, where they begin by standing and forming a circle. Various categories to which they might belong are then presented. These might include those who: speak more than one language, play a sport, play a musical instrument, like solving jigsaw puzzles, enjoy public speaking, have held official or unofficial leadership positions, are considered problem solvers by their friends, and so on.

When a student belongs to a category named, he goes to the center of the circle and gives a high five sign to the other members of this group. If the student is the only member of a group, he takes a bow. This gives another opportunity to record information. At the end, each student gets a chance to name a group he or she belongs to that has not yet been used. This affords the opportunity to discover other enthusiasts of that activity.

These pre-assessment strategies and activities allow teachers to differentiate curriculum throughout the year, and to be more successful in teaching to the interests and skills of a diverse student population. To those who question sacrificing a week of the curriculum for pre-assessment, I assure you that the information obtained during the first week of school helps to shape the curriculum more efficiently, allows more time to teach, and affords more confidence that the lessons are appropriate for the students I teach. ■

STEVE KAHL is the GATE Coordinator and English teacher at Independence High School in the East Side Union High School District, San Jose, California. He has been CAG Teacher of the Year for the Santa Lucia Region.

PERSONAL CONDUCT STANDARDS

(Note: These standards were acquired through the method mentioned in this article)

Each standard will be measured using a range of zero to four.
Four represents superior modeling of a particular standard.
Three represents effective demonstration of a particular standard.
Two represents some success at meeting a particular standard.
One represents little or no success at meeting a particular standard.
Zero represents no apparent attempt at meeting a particular standard.

____ Participates regularly
____ Helps to make other students feel comfortable in class
____ Uses humor regularly and appropriately
____ Demonstrates respect for other students and the teacher
____ Listens attentively to student speakers and to the teacher
____ Demonstrates enthusiasm for the subject matter
____ Supports other students in learning
____ Is well prepared for class
____ Uses time well
____ Cooperates with other students and the teacher
____ Works for excellence
____ Works to develop an intimate community of learners
____ Is open minded
____ Tolerates diverse beliefs, lifestyles, personalities
____ Works toward common class goals
____ Develops adult-adult relationships with other students and teacher
____ Works to get to know other students

Figure 1. Personal Conduct Standards

Figure 2. Self-Assessment of English Skills

Using Portfolios Effectively in Middle Schools

Portfolio contents tell teachers and parents a story about the students who design them

BY DEBRA JOHNSON

Papers were flying everywhere. Kids were repeatedly questioning the value of each item being considered for their portfolios. As I began reviewing individual portfolios, I realized that somewhere we had missed the portfolio boat. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason to our effort. Each portfolio was no more than a scrapbook of student work. My frustration level was at its height.

Well, I am not a quitter, but this first attempt at teaching my students the portfolio process was enough to make me say, "Never, again!" This task was more than I wanted to deal with and the process was quite time-consuming.

Then something amazing happened—Back-to-School Night.

Back-to-School Night occurred about a week after our paper-flying event. I was still not very happy with our final portfolios, but the parents appeared very happy. Students were flipping through their samples of work and talking about what they had learned. One dad even had a tear running down his cheek as his son revealed his essay entitled, "My Dad, My Hero." The night was definitely a success for all. That is when I knew I was committed to the portfolio process and determined to make it work effectively.

Student portfolios can be used at any grade level, but the process described in this article is particularly useful at the middle school level. This is a time when adolescents need to begin focusing on self-learning and exploring possible career paths. However, guiding middle school students in developing effective portfolios is a challenge that requires a high level of commitment from teachers. Teachers need to understand the process completely and believe in the value of keeping and maintaining the portfolios.

Understanding the Purpose of Portofolios

To help students develop an understanding of portfolio, we must first define portfolio for ourselves. What images come to your mind when you hear the word "portfolio"? Do you think of a shoe box or other storage container? Maybe you see a three-ring binder, a book, or a folder. Or perhaps you are more into technology and conjure up a computer disk? While most of us probably envision one or more of these things, these images alone do not provide a complete definition of portfolios.

Vicki Spandel and Ruth Culham developed portfolio training materials in 1993, and their definition states that "...any portfolio exists first and foremost in the heart and mind of the designer, who selects with care those works and artifacts that best tell the story of who that person is now—and who he or she is becoming"(Kimeldorf, 1994). By using this definition we assign ownership of the portfolio to each student and define it as a unique tool that paints a picture of his or her accomplishments and goals.

We also need to understand the rationale for using portfolios. What is the purpose?

Marten Kimeldorf's book, *A Teacher's Guide to Creating Portfolios*, provides an excellent rationale for portfolio use as he quotes Robert Tierney. Tierney states:

> By encouraging students to engage in self and peer evaluation, teachers empower students to take control of their own learning. When students help determine the criteria for assessment, they can make reasonable decisions about the quality of their own work. By engaging students in self-assessments, students learn they are ultimately responsible for their own learning. It is in this area that portfolios are so powerful (Kimeldorf,1994).

In developing our rationale for the utilization of portfolios, it is also important to reflect upon findings of recent educational research on assessment. Through many research efforts, we know that effective

schools are those that have been found to frequently monitor student progress using a variety of assessments. This variety of assessments, known as multi-dimensional assessments, includes performance-based assessments, portfolios, and indirect testing measures.

In *Caught in the Middle*, it is stated:

> Assessment programs for the middle grades should be comprehensive; they should include measurement of a broad range of educational goals related to student achievement and program effectiveness; the primary purpose of middle grade assessment should be to compile data which lead to improved curriculum and instructional programs and more effective student support services (Middle Grade Task Force Report, page 112).

Benefits of Portfolios

Once the rationale has been established, it is important to look at the benefits of portfolios. These benefits fall into the three categories:

Instructional

- Helps students accomplish academic goals
- Aids in development of critical thinking and self-reflection skills
- Assists in management and evaluation of self learning.

Motivational

- Helps students discover themselves as learners
- Boosts student self-concept

Assessment

- Assists in documenting what students know and are able to do
- Helps students demonstrate their attainment of specific learning objectives
- Provides a tool that assists in demonstrating that a student has the skills and attitudes necessary to be successful

The Process of Portfolio Development

Th e are three keys that are vital to developing middle school portfolios that are effective. The first key is student control. Students should determine what should go in the portfolio, why it should go in, what story the contents will tell, and how the contents should be organized and displayed.

The second key is teacher as facilitator. Teachers need to be willing to turn control over to students trusting them to pick their best work. They need to be willing to take risks (you never know what students will come up with). Since students seem to go off in many directions, it is important for teachers to be very flexible and to see themselves as coaches or mentors rather than dispensers of information. It is also necessary for teachers to value and emphasize thinking skills and believe that students should take an active role in their learning.

The third key is an understanding of the challenges of creating a portfolio. Many students have limited experience regarding development of self-knowledge. They need time to reflect and think about their personal life experiences. They also need to begin to confront three critical life-planning questions:

- Who am I?
- What have I accomplished?
- What do I want to become?

Figure 1 illustrates the implementation of an effective portfolio program.

Storage

In considering possibilities for storage, it is important to note that there are two types of portfolios that will be utilized by students—the collection portfolio and the showcase portfolio. The collection portfolio will hold all work samples related to specific learning and personal goals set by each student. Later students will select samples from their collection portfolio to put in their final showcase portfolio. As its name suggests, the showcase portfolio will hold the best samples of student work.

The size of the work samples to be collected, the space available for storage, and the amount of money available to spend are all considerations that must be addressed during the storage phase of the portfolio development process. Some possible storage ideas are:

- Use folders for the collection portfolio, stored in a central location or kept with the student, and a three-ring binder for the showcase portfolio.

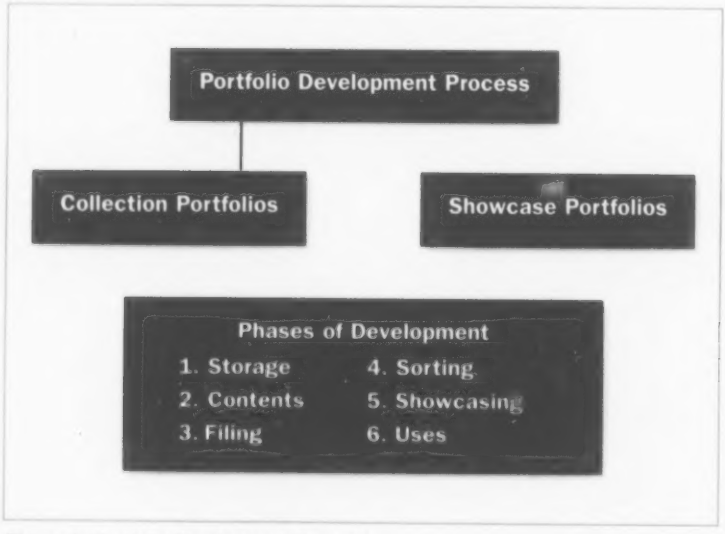

Figure 1. Portfolio Development Process

- Use a three-ring binder for the collection portfolio, kept with the student, and a student designed container for the showcase portfolio.
- Use folders for the collection portfolio, stored in a central location or kept with the student, and student designed containers for the showcase portfolio.

The three-ring binders with the plastic sleeves on the outside covers are great for allowing students to personalize their portfolio. Students can design their own personal logo or other personalized drawings and slide them into the plastic sleeve on the outside cover of the binder. Many teachers who have used this method have found that it is better to laminate the student drawings before sliding them into the plastic sleeve of the binder. Without lamination, the drawings or writing will rub off on the plastic. This can be a problem if the binders are to be reused by future students.

Contents

The first content items are the learning and personal goals. Learning goals should include both long and short term goals for individual student learning in each curricular area. Long-term learning goals should be more general and the short-term learning goals more specific. The state frameworks and standards, district curriculum guides, and district standards should be utilized in helping students to develop learning goals. Learning goals should also address student expectations and student behaviors.

Personal goals for student portfolios should be limited to only two or three goals. These may be revised quarterly or at other times when students evaluate their progress towards these goals. Personal goals should address academic as well as social aspirations and each goal should suggest results that would demonstrate accomplishment.

The learning and personal goals provide the focus for each student's portfolio. The items that will be added to the collection portfolio and finally the showcase portfolio will be items that demonstrate progress towards these goals.

An autobiography is the next important content item that should be included; it not only provides a forum for self-reflection, but also provides a sample of each student's writing at the beginning of the portfolio development process. The autobiography might include: background information, interests, future dreams, successful experiences, and academic and personal challenges.

Filing

To eliminate an over flow of papers, papers, and more papers, it is necessary to teach students a filing system during the beginning stages of portfolio instruction. Options include having students file their own papers, having portfolio aides do all the filing, or having students file their own papers with aides checking the files occasionally for misfiled papers.

Each work sample filed should be dated and filed in chronological order. There should also be a working inventory cover page to identify the samples placed in the folder. A record of observed behaviors may also be included in the collection portfolio to organize anecdotal records and other items that document progress toward learning and personal goals.

Sorting

Sorting of the work samples in the collection portfolio can begin anytime it is convenient or meaningful to the teacher or students. Students begin by reflecting upon the contents of their collection portfolios and the progress they have made to determine which items should be displayed in their showcase portfolios.

To begin the sorting process, first establish a criteria for what should be put into the showcase portfolio. This is a perfect time to review goals, writing rubrics, and other evaluation tools that will aid in the selection of items for the showcase portfolio. Then have students arrange their collection portfolio contents according to date. During this time, students should be allowed time to talk to their peers and their teacher about the progress they see in their work. Any work not selected for the showcase portfolio should go home with the students. Throughout the sorting process, teachers should be guiding students in reflecting upon the progress revealed in their work.

Showcase Preparation

This is a time in which students may design their own portfolio giving the showcase portfolio a more personal touch. Along with samples of student work, the following should be included with the showcase portfolio:

- A showcase portfolio statement giving the purpose of the portfolio and the categories of work that are represented in the portfolio
- Copies of learning and personal goals
- An autobiographical essay
- Student reflective responses for each area being assessed
- A parent conference form that provides parents with an opportunity to express, in writing, their thoughts concerning their child's portfolio
- A presentation evaluation tool that can be used by individual students after student-led conference presentations.

Uses

The contents of the showcase portfolio provides evidence of what students know and are able to do, and how well they are achieving. Combined with the reflections written by students, the contents of the showcase portfolio provide teachers with a good idea of appropriate grades and the materials to back up grading decisions. Therefore, the use of the showcase portfolio is valuable in contributing to multidimensional

assessment.

Another use of showcase portfolios is in student-led conferences. In fact, the showcase portfolio is the central focus of parent conferences led by students. It provides students with an easy-to-follow format in which to discuss their achievements with their parents.

Prior to conducting student-led conferences, students should be given opportunity to practice the conference procedures with their peers. Students should be able to communicate the learning and personal goals of their portfolio and illustrate to their parents areas of success and areas in which they need more growth.

The main factors that will ensure success in the development of successful portfolios for middle school students is planning and team work. Students and teachers should work together to develop a timeline of portfolio events that need to take place prior to parent conferences or at the end of assessment periods. This effort will reap great rewards for all and will eliminate the confusion that can lead to papers flying everywhere. ■

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DEBRA JOHNSON is a sixth-grade teacher and GATE site coordinator at Almeria Middle School in Fontana. She also serves as the Associate Editor for Youth Pages for the Communicator, and as a member of the executive board of the Riverside Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa. For additional information or to request sample worksheets, contact Debra at DebJoAnn@aol.com.

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THIS WE BELIEVE

Continued from 1

that all students be provided with an education that meets each individual's particular requirements or needs. Just as modifications in the curriculum are made for learners who cannot keep up with the majority of learners their age, modifications should also be made for those who can far outpace the majority. Few advocates, however, have examined the philosophy and recommended practices espoused by middle level educational leaders.

The National Middle School Association describes itself as the only association devoted entirely to education of young adolescents, with membership primarily of middle level teachers and administrators, and members in all 50 states, Canada, and dozens of other foreign countries. Conference attendance in recent years has surpassed 10,000 registrants. The organization serves as "a voice for professionals and others interested in the education of young adolescents." As such, the voice of the NMSA is an important one which gifted education practitioners must listen to carefully.

While differences regarding the efficacy and equity of ability grouping and cooperative learning teaching strategies have generated considerable discord between middle school professionals and gifted and talented educators, it is important to review the philosophy developed by middle level advocates and professionals before dismissing their efforts. This article will focus on specific portions of the position paper entitled, *This We Believe*, which was first prepared by the National Middle School Association in 1982, then revised and approved by its Board of Trustees in 1995. All references are to the 1995 revised document, 6th printing, June 1998.

Portions of *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* read like a parent's dream as the answer to the best possible place for a gifted child during the middle school years; educators in gifted education can heartily support them as well. Six general tenets are identified, followed by six major areas or program components. The summary statement reads as follows:

> National Middle School Association believes:
> Developmentally responsive middle level schools are characterized by:
> - Educators committed to young adolescents
> - A shared vision
> - High expectations for all
> - An adult advocate for every student
> - Family and community partnerships
> - A positive school climate
>
> Therefore, developmentally responsive middle level schools provide:
> - Curriculum that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory
> - Varied teaching and learning approaches
> - Assessment and evaluation that promote learning
> - Flexible organizational structures
> - Programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety
> - Comprehensive guidance and support services. (p.11)

In confirming middle school advocacy for all young adolescents, emphasis is placed on educators who "make sound pedagogical decisions based on the needs, interests, and special abilities of their students. They are sensitive to individual differences and respond positively to the natural diversity present in middle level classrooms" (p. 13).

This statement implies that the special needs of gifted learners, including their advanced intellectual needs and social and emotional needs should be taken into consideration when planning and delivering service.

In the section entitled, High Expectations for All, NMSA recognizes that "successful middle level schools are grounded in understanding that young adolescents are capable of far more than adults often assume" (p. 15). Furthermore, promoting high achievement, "requires adults to start where students are, understanding their individual needs, interests, and learning styles, then fashioning a substantive curriculum and pace learning to meet individual levels of understanding" (p. 16).

This implies that pretesting should occur regularly and students should not be required to repeat or engage in lengthy review of material already mastered. Individual pacing of learning implies that gifted learners should be encouraged and be provided with the means to surge forward as their abilities allow, not having to wait for everyone in the class to catch up before moving on.

Perhaps the greatest concern to parents of gifted students is that their children be provided with challenging curriculum. NMSA warns that

> Given the developmental diversity in any middle level classroom, gearing curriculum to students' levels of understanding is a daunting task. In addition to different rates of development and learning styles, varying cultural backgrounds and prior experience must be taken into account. Efforts to reduce tracking and to include students with special needs in regular classes increase the diversity even further. Adapting curriculum so as to challenge each and every student requires significant collaboration among regular and special education teachers, counselors, school social workers, parents, and the students themselves.
>
> In essence, every student needs an individualized educational plan. Both content and methods must be individualized. As a first step, teachers can provide choices among learning opportunities, ranging from those that tax even the most gifted and talented students to

> those that enable the least capable to succeed with a reasonable expenditure of effort. Independent study, small group work, special interest courses, and apprenticeships are other means by which curriculum can challenge students through addressing individual needs. (pp. 21, 22)

Individualizing curriculum as described above appears to match the requirement of "differentiating curriculum" defined by leaders and practitioners in gifted education. It implies that factors such as increased depth and complexity, opportunity for novelty, and a faster rate of learning should be available to gifted learners in middle level schools.

The section on varied teaching and learning approaches explains that "teaching techniques should enhance and accommodate the diverse skills, abilities, and knowledge of young adolescents, cultivate multiple intelligences, and capitalize on students' individual learning styles" (p. 24). In so doing, it is expected that, "Varying forms of group work are used, depending on the purpose, with students at different times clustered randomly, by ability, by interest, or by other criteria" (p. 25).

Furthermore,

> Individual differences are also accommodated through numerous opportunities for student choice, both within the regular classroom and in electives and co-curricular programs that appeal to students with special talents or interests—intellectual, athletic or artistic. School personnel consult with families of students who have special needs in determining the best educational programs for those students. (p. 25)

This clearly implies that opportunities should be made available for gifted students to be grouped together, at least part of the school day. It is not clear whether gifted students are considered "special needs" students as they are in the field of gifted education; but if yes, then the implication is that parents of gifted children should also be regularly consulted in determining learning programs for their children.

The next segment tells us that,

"continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment and evaluation are essential components of the learning process at any age level, providing information that students, teachers, and family members need to plan further learning" (p. 26).

This statement could come straight out of a text on gifted education, and among other things, supports the notion that gifted learners should not be held back or slowed in their learning to match the pace of the majority of learners.

In fact, there is very little in the document even remotely antithetical to the best learning practices appropriate for all learners—including gifted learners. While we may disagree on specific practices, especially those of heterogeneous vs. homogeneous classes, and the appropriate use of cooperative learning, the stated philosophy and recommended practices are highly laudatory. Those middle schools carrying out the philosophy and standards established by the NMSA ought to be applauded for doing so; those who are not need to be held accountable.

It is up to you to determine how well your middle school is living up to the philosophy outlined. The check list on page 40 may assist you in doing so. ■

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Sold Up River

A reflection of slavery days before the Civil War

BY SARAH BUSTER

I was standing there.
My hair was everywhere.
But I didn't care.

I was standing there
Waiting for someone to call
their bid,
My brother Sid,
Was crying for Ma,
She was sold along with Pa.

A man called out,
The man was fat and stout.
I had been sold up river
As I watched Sid stand on the
block.
I began to quiver, as we
walked to the dock.

Where will Sid go?
I may never know.

Sarah Buster is an eighth grade GATE student at Sequoia Middle School in Fontana. Sarah wrote this poem when she was in the fifth grade.

MEASURING UP TO PHILOSOPHY

How well does your middle school serve gifted and talented learners?

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never	Don't Know
Advocacy					
1. Administrators, teachers, and research specialists work together to plan for the special needs of gifted learners.					
High Expectations					
2. Pretesting occurs regularly in the disciplines					
3. Students are not required to repeat material already mastered					
4. Students are permitted to go through material rapidly when capable of doing so, and give evidence of mastery as they progress					
Curriculum					
5. Curriculum is regularly modified to challenge gifted learners					
6. Teachers provide choices among learning opportunities including ones that challenge gifted learners					
7. Meaningful independent study opportunities, small group work, special interest courses, and apprenticeships are available					
Teaching/Learning Strategies					
8. Ability grouping of gifted learners is planned and consistent					
9. Meaningful offerings are available to students with special talents or interests—intellectual, athletic, and/or artistic					
10. Parents are consulted in determining the best educational programs for gifted learners					
Assessment					
11. Systems for continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment and evaluation of gifted learners are planned and implemented					
12. Gifted learners are not held back nor made to wait for slower learners before moving on in their own intellectual pursuits					

TEACHING KIDS TO CARE

Continued from 1

our job, as adults, to help our children act upon that caring.

…So we began: two classes of middle school students who decided to let Brian know that 56 kids in a town 20 miles away were concerned about him and his family. The students each wrote letters, attaching them to "the world's largest greeting card," sending messages of hope and comfort.

We heard nothing back.

The next month, November, we delivered a "cornucopia of concern," more cards and letters for Brian and his children to read over Thanksgiving dinner.

Still, no response.

Then, for the winter holidays, the children wrote and produced a video of skits and songs and bad jokes, hoping that Brian might get a ho-ho-ho out of their collective antics.

And on December 20, we heard back:

"Dear Boys and Girls," the letter began, "our family has been so very pleased and deeply touched by your wonderful notes of encouragement and get well wishes for my husband, Brian, following the incident of the rock throwing. You have been an inspiration to us and have helped to renew our faith in people by your care and concern. With this kind of positive support, we will survive this ordeal."

Thus began "Project Person to Person," our middle school's attempt to provide help or a "thank you" to those in our community who needed either.

Character education and the gifted middle school student

> *Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has had two great goals: to help young people to become smart and to help them become good.*
>
> —Thomas Lickona, 1991, p. 6

For as long as structured society has existed, there have been calls to teach our young people the ethics of everyday living. In recent times, though, this idea has been met with concern or criticism by factions of parents and educators who fear that a particular set of values will be taught. Yet, when I consider the goals of character education—instilling a sense of community pride and personal integrity with a willingness to reach out to another human being—I wonder which political or religious sensitivities I am offending. I am not quite sure how to teach the life lessons of compassion, humility, perseverance and hope apart from the everyday life experiences of others. If, indeed, service is the rent we pay for our time spent on Earth, then these life lessons must exist in both our homes and our schools.

This is especially true for middle school students, whose awareness of themselves grows with every opportunity they get to identify with others. And, when giftedness is added into the equation, the need for character education in the middle grades is even that more stunning. Who among us has not met a twelve year old who is "gifted in the heart," aware of the fragility of the human spirit? Who among us has not seen a gifted teenager angry at some arbitrary decision that reduces another individual's dignity or autonomy? Who among us has not comforted a gifted young person who saw vividly the dissonance between an adult's words and his actions? For the greatest reason of all—the preservation of hope in the human condition—character education is a basic skill. In today's complex world, learning to care is equally as important as learning to read. One of gifted child education's greatest and warmest thinkers, Annemarie Roeper, notes this necessary connection between the world of school and the world outside of the classroom:

> Children need to live in a world that is relevant. They need to grow in an educational environment that prepares them to make sense of the real world and gives them the tools to change it. The difference is that gifted children know this and can articulate it, while others just accept it. (Roeper, 1995, p. 142)

So, how is character education done effectively in the schools? Where does one begin to act upon the caring that is inherently a part of childhood? Let me count the ways.

Character education begins from the inside out

It is difficult for children to care about the well-being of others if they do not feel safe, comfortable and at ease with themselves. Indeed, in our world of increasingly-fractured families and the academic homage paid to statewide tests that compare children and schools rather than envisioning each child as a unique entity, this sense of self is difficult for some children to find.

William Purkey and John Novak (1996) recommend adopting school policies that invite children to learn, based on the following principles:

1. People are able, valuable and responsible and should be treated accordingly
2. Teaching should be a cooperative activity
3. People possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development

Purkey and Novak believe that school policies and programs can have a profound effect on children's self-concepts and school achievement. Everything from the way classroom rules are worded (See Figure 1) to the way students are greeted by the school bus driver in the morning, to the content of teachers' comments on students' projects and papers will have an impact on the way children see themselves as learners…and as people. Only when the power of the school climate is considered can one hope to institute a character education program. It might be a truism that "to give

respect one must first get respect", but without this personal foundation of self-worth, there is little one can do to positively affect the lives of others.

CLASSROOM RULES

1. Walking in the hall prevents accidents.
2. Be mature and serious during fire drills.
3. Enjoy chewing your gum at home.
4. When in groups, talk in six-inch voices.
5. Ask before you use.
6. People can be hurt by both words and actions, so choose both with care.

Please remember. Kindness is contagious!

(Delisle and Delisle. 1996. p. 6)

Figure 1. Classroom rules

Character education activities share some common elements

Classroom–based lessons to teach middle school children about their world share several qualities. First, *they involve both cognitive and affective learning opportunities*, calling on students to think, feel, and react simultaneously. Next, *they are experiential*, based on the belief that middle school children already know much about themselves and the world around them, and that they are always curious to learn more. In addition, *they are product focused*, allowing students to demonstrate in a concrete way the depth of their thinking and feeling. Finally, *they must be holistically evaluated*, removing from the students' minds the "curse" of a letter or number grade, which would be an artificial barometer of a project's quality.

An example of the above type of classroom activity can be seen in Figure 2. In response to the question about inviting any three people to dinner who had ever lived, one sixth-grade student wrote:

> I would invite my real grandma, because she died before I was born. Everyone says I look like her but I don't even know who she is. I'd also invite my third grade teacher, Ms. Heflin, because she retired during the year because of a heart problem. Next, I'd invite my little cousin, Eric. I'd like to get to know him as if he were my brother. (I do have another cousin, but he isn't allowed to do anything that'll get him hyper, like playing football).

When a classroom—or, better yet, a team—of students complete this activity, and the responses are lined up side-by-side on construction paper and displayed for all to see (we arranged ours to look like a centipede; hence, the "Bug Myself" activity title), you have a visual display of children's dreams, hopes, uncertainties and memories. From here, it is but one short step to seeing yourself as connected to others both inside and outside of the school environment.

Character education is best taught within a community

In 1912, a recently-arrived European immigrant wrote a letter home to his relatives. In it he said: "When I came to America, I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: first, the streets weren't paved with gold; second, they weren't paved at all; and third, I was expected to pave them."

As parents and other educators, it is one of our jobs to serve as the mortar while our children lay the bricks to the next generation. Taking character education into the community is one way to do just that.

This article began with the story of a man who was injured by an unknown assailant, and the responses of middle school students to this injustice. Other "Project Person-to-Person" activities completed within this same school within a five-year period included:

- Transporting more than 2,000 teddy bears with personal messages of hope to families who had lost their homes and possessions in a hurricane. (The mayor of Charleston, SC wrote the kids a *great* thank you letter!)
- Sending thank you letters shaped like playground equipment to a local toy manufacturer that had distributed $17,000 worth of free toys to local family shelters for the winter holidays. (Two months later, the company's CEO sent us some prototype toys, to see which ones we thought little tykes would like best.)
- Creating 35 hand-decorated banners made out of muslin and distributing them (through the U.S. Army) to men and women stationed in Bosnia. (Soldiers wrote back their thanks, complete with photos of our banners hanging in their tents or barracks.)
- For community residents who were just beginning a "Stop

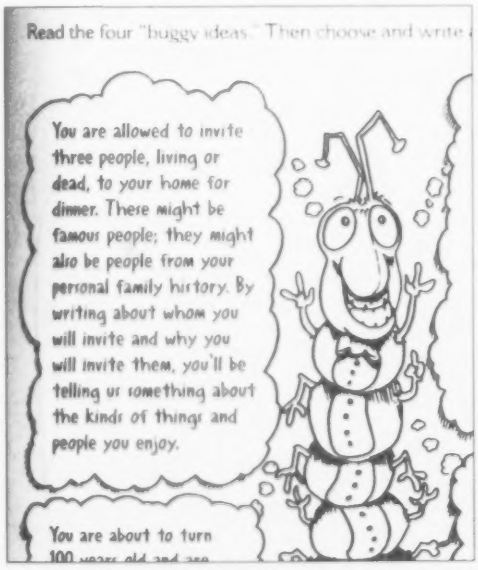
Read the four "buggy ideas." Then choose and write
You are allowed to invite three people, living or dead, to your home for dinner. There might be famous people; they might also be people from your personal family history. By writing about whom you will invite and why you will invite them, you'll be telling us something about the kinds of things and people you enjoy.
You are about to turn

Figure 2. "Bug Myself" Reprinted with permission from *Free Spirit Press*, Growing Good Kids, p 27.

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smoking" program, students fashioned filtered cigarettes out of brown and white construction paper, and wrote messages of support to these folks trying to kick the habit. The "cigarettes" were distributed the first night of class. (Weeks later, an older gentleman came to our class clutching our now-worn homemade cigarette, thanking us for being his "anchor" when he needed one.)

- Working in cooperation with the Peace Corps, the students sold or raffled off food and gifts donated by local groceries and department stores to raise money to furnish a secondary school library in Nepal. (Months later, we received back a 10-page diary of the Peace Corps volunteer's four-day trek through the Himalayas to purchase and transport the books, as well as photos of the "library," that was little more than a storage shed filled with books, two tables, and many happy students!)
- Inviting into school the Director of the local Animal Protective League, who spoke of the care and responsibility of pet ownership. She brought in Snuggles, a terrier mix puppy, and the students, collectively, wrote a letter for the local newspaper's "Adopt-A-Pet" column asking for someone to take Snuggles into their home. (The letter was published and someone adopted Snuggles that same day.)
- Refurnishing an entire home for a household of seven who had lost all of their uninsured possessions in a fire. Championed and coordinated by three sixth graders, the students solicited help from all members of the community—friends, neighbors, relatives, businesses. Everything–from clothing to lamps to a refrigerator–was collected and distributed to the family, whose mother gave this message: "It sort of restores your faith in people. It's hard to believe there are such nice people in the world. Here are people who you'll never know and will never know you, yet they are willing to help."

Important Reminders in Designing Character Education Projects

1. Start projects that will impact others outside the school community only after the students and teachers inside the school community have had a chance to get to know each other.
2. Involve parents as volunteers and idea generators for projects. Not only might they have great ideas, they may also have influential "connections" in the community with whom students can communicate.
3. Don't "overdose" the students on community service by doing one activity after another. Instead, have different classrooms or grade levels undertake different projects, or pursue one or two (no more) large-scale projects each year that are schoolwide in focus.
4. If your school has a Student Council or other student leadership group, consider running at least some of these projects through them, as you already have students there who are committed to leadership and challenge.
5. Don't expect that every student will be excited about character education projects, and do not force participation upon all students. Often, the more reluctant students get pulled along by the excitement of other students anyway, so try to let this occur naturally.
6. Do projects that are small in scale but may still be large in impact. Sending get well wishes to one individual is teaching students the message that the world gets better one day, one person at a time.
7. Don't focus solely on fund-raising activities. This may limit participation to students who can "afford" to be charitable.
8. Keep a journal, diary or scrapbook of the activities undertaken in successive years. Students—and others—will be amazed at the personal history that such chronicles represent.

Figure 3. Important Reminders in Designing Character Education Projects

...and that's the point of leadership, isn't it? Not responding to a call for help or a need for a thank you because of what you might get in return, but rather, what you might help *others* gain by your recognition that we all share the same space in this ocean of existence called life.

Character education programs may or may not help to improve scores on standardized tests, but what character education *will* do is bring together a community of learners who are seeking answers whose solutions begin in the soul and emanate outward. For those middle school students who are "gifted in the heart," there is no better way to tap into the wisdom and kindness of childhood than through school-based activities that are best measured by using the yardsticks of empathy, compassion and hope.

...Back to Brian, our first "Project Person to Person" recipient of good wishes and sincere support. Brian's progress was slow (it still is), and he was not able to visit our classroom that year, as he had wanted to do. However, his wife and children did visit, and they became our unofficial "room family," comrades in hope and bearers of Brian's messages to two classrooms of children who took the time to help a one-time stranger who had grown to become our friend.

From my perspective as the teacher, the greatest lesson learned that year is one that can never be measured by a test: the capacity to care. ■

Resources in Character Education

The Character Education Partnership (CEP). This is the "flagship" operation of many other service learning and character education programs. The CEP publishes its own journal, ***Character Education Journal,*** sponsors national and regional conferences, and has developed "Eleven Principles of Character Education," which is available on its website. Contact CEP at 800-988-8081, 918 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20002. Website: www.character.org

Standing Tall: A Character Education Service Learning Program, published by The Giraffe Project. This curriculum guidebook for grades 6–9 is filled with ideas for implementing character education in your community. Also, it introduces students to "giraffes," people across the world who "stick out their necks." Contact the Giraffe Project at (360) 221-7989, P.O. Box 759, Langley, WA 98260. Website: www.giraffe.org

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC). This organization reviews national character education/service learning programs available worldwide for K-12 students. Their publication, ***Learning by Giving: K-8 Service Learning Curriculum Guides,*** are especially helpful and practical. A journal, ***The Generator,*** is devoted to service learning, as is their quarterly newsletter, ***Making the Case.*** An annual conference is offered. Contact NYLC at (612) 631-3672, 1910 W. County Road B, St. Paul, MN 55113. Website: www.nylc.org

Quest International The mission of Quest is "to nurture responsibility and caring in young people where they live, learn, work and play." By supporting adults who work with young people, Quest offers programs and materials useful for educators and counselors, including ***Skills for Adolescence (Grades 6–8)*** and ***Skills for Action (Grades 9–12)***. Contact Quest at (800) 446-2700, P.O. Box 4850, Newark, OH 43058. Website: www.quest.edu

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COLLEGE PREP

Continued from 8

school to deepen and broaden understanding. This approach is especially helpful to under-challenged students. Help them explore areas of interest, to make connections between their interests and what is being studied in school.

Get to know and understand your children and help them get to know themselves. If you don't already know about the characteristics of gifted children, now is a good time to learn. That knowledge base will be beneficial in understanding your children. One source of "characteristics of the gifted" is the CAG publication, *Meeting the Challenge* (1996).

In trying to match colleges and students, there are many good choices. The best selection will be made when parents know and understand their students. What are the individual learning needs? Are there disabilities that need to be accommodated? Assist students in developing and recognizing their value systems, interests, and passions. Help them to recognize what is and is not important to them in life. Recognize that children are individuals, not clones of parents. They frequently have differing values, interests, and goals, and although that may be difficult for parents to accept, abide we must.

In addition, different colleges have different strengths and opportunities. Some are better suited to meet the needs of certain children. Hence, it is worthwhile now to develop a sense of learning styles and student needs. In high school it will be easier to correlate student needs with college strengths.

Assist in developing time management strategies. Typically the intensity and varied interests of GATE children involve them in many activities and that can lead to over extension, or "burn out" without the wise counsel of parents. Colleges look for the well balanced child, one who is actively involved in the community, academics, and school organizations. Time management becomes

the key, and with parental support it becomes a life-long skill.

Visit college and university campuses with your children. On any vacation, weekend excursion, or occasionally even for an evening out, try to incorporate a visit to a college campus. At this time, the information sessions and tours aren't important (they are crucial by the junior year), but letting students get the "feel" of a campus is. Each school has its own culture and atmosphere. The physical appearance may be how the school is remembered, but it is the "feel" that will be the determining factor in whether or not the student ultimately applies to or chooses to attend. Even though they may not recognize it, students begin to form a sense of where they will be comfortable.

Be sure to visit a variety of types and sizes of colleges and in different locations of the country if at all possible, but definitely visit those schools around you. Try to incorporate private and public, small and large, four-year and two-year colleges, and universities on your tours. Look at the buildings, where the school is located compared to the surroundings, and consider what the surroundings are like. Does your student feel comfortable in that environment? Involve children in the planning of trips and researching something about the colleges in the area. Assist them in taking ownership of the planning process. Ultimately the choice they make for their post secondary lives is theirs alone, difficult as it may be to accept; therefore, their early and continuous involvement without pressure is essential.

Develop a supportive and nurturing relationship including open channels of communication. Be a coach in encouraging your children to do the things they need to in preparation for post secondary education as well as helping to keep them motivated now. See the accompanying list for students, and encourage them in everything they need to do. Be a supporter. For example, by knowing your child, you will recognize whether you will need to prepare the computer profile (described in the student list) or if your child can readily accept the responsibility.

Begin the process of "letting go" gradually now, if you haven't already. Believe it or not, the next four to six years will fly by. While you are still the parent with the responsibility for your children, they need to increasingly know themselves and become self-reliant. We need to support and guide them in this effort so that when they do leave the nest, they will be able to handle all the day-to-day decisions successfully.

STUDENTS

Students need to take an active role in the college preparation process. Here are some key topics to consider.

Read, read, read. Studying for the SAT and other standardized exams doesn't begin in high school and certainly not the weekend before the exam. Studying and taking practice exams is helpful but the test measures knowledge acquired over time. Vocabulary plays a major role and one of the best ways to build vocabulary is by reading. Students should keep a vocabulary journal in which each unknown word is written, later defined using a dictionary, and then used in sentences. Reading most anything is acceptable, so long as the student is engaged, but classics that interest the student should be intermingled. Remember that most colleges require the SAT or ACT as part of the application process, and regardless of what is thought of standardized examinations, they are universal measures colleges can and do use to assess future success and compatibility with a given institution.

Start a student profile NOW if you have not already done so. A file folder is workable, but the computer is even better because it can be easily updated. Include the basics of name; address; phone number; e-mail; fax number; schools attended; grades received; in school and out of school activities; standardized exams taken, their dates and the scores; dates of jobs; community service; honors and awards; educational and/or career goals. The profile will be very helpful later in completing college applications and when requesting teacher and counselor recommendations. The profile will provide them with quick reminders of you as a student.

Look for special summer (or break) programs and participate whenever possible. There are a variety of talent searches for middle school students that provide opportunities for students in grades 6–8. Two of these programs are the UCI Academic Talent Search at the University of California at Irvine, and the IAAY, The John Hopkins University program. There are various other programs such as Super Camp, and many local programs to explore that are fun and will build skills needed for success.

A side benefit of some of these programs is that they are held on college campuses. As noted in the preceding parent section, college campus visits are essential. These programs give the student exposure to different surroundings, often on college campuses, and to people from varying parts of the country. These programs will not only be intrinsically beneficial but will also look good on the college profile or resume.

Get to know and understand yourself. The more you recognize what makes you "feel" good, e. g. being alone or with others, in large groups or in small ones, the easier it will be to make decisions later. Would you like to be in another part of the country for a brief time, to experience a "real" non-California winter? What would it be like to be in the deep south or on the East coast? Do you like rural or metropolitan areas?

Participate in extracurricular activities. Admission counselors look for well rounded students and ones who have made commitments to specific activities. For example, one who has participated in a particular sport or music activity since the primary grades shows something quite different from the one who suddenly joins sports in high school to build a résumé.

Begin to find your passion by exploring a variety of activities. Not all gifted children want to attend college, nor should they. Although this may sound like heresy, it is very important that each person is allowed to find and follow the path which will bring the most happiness. That may mean that a trade school or a two-year college would be better for an individual than a four-year college. Identifying possible career choices early by job shadowing, research, talking with people in a given occupation, volunteering in the same or related job is very helpful. If you are rather sure about your career choice, it will help in the college selection process. For example, if you know you want to be a nurse, there are only certain schools that have nursing programs. If you are unsure, there are many colleges with a liberal arts focus.

Take the most rigorous, yet enjoyable, curriculum available to you. Although technically speaking, the middle school or junior high grades "don't count", the curriculum clearly leads into the high school. For example, if a foreign language is taken each year in the middle years, by high school the student will be taking the fourth year of the language. College counselors will know the student has had the preceding 3 years. The curriculum does count. Most courses have prerequisites. There may also be ways to work in those academic and extracurricular awards on the application or resume. In addition, developing excellent study skills and knowing how to cope with rigor and stress will be very beneficial in college where *everyone* is in the top of class! Now is the time to learn these skills.

Community service is highly regarded by college counselors. Seek opportunities through already existing contacts—possibly through a religious institution or activity, through scouts, in political campaigns, in charities, or with animals. Again, seek your passions and explore your interests.

The process of preparing for college starts early. Whatever a student's age, begin now to develop a nurturing relationship, to get to know and understand your student, to help him or her get a "feel" for different colleges, to establish good study habits and a personal profile. Parents and students working together during the middle years will make the college search odyssey in high school a much smoother journey. Happy hunting! ■

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SELECTED READINGS

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on the value of ability grouping and the social consequences of being labeled gifted.

***Gifted Education and Middle Schools* (1996). Videotape and Book. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. A product of the National Training Program for Gifted Education. Based on a Council for Exceptional Children Symposium on Gifted Education and Middle Schools (Reston, VA: January, 1995). ED398666**

This book and video are based on a symposium of leaders in the fields of gifted education and middle-level education, which was held to identify and explore areas of agreement in often contrasting philosophies. Emphasis is on identifying areas of agreement between the fields, areas of tension, and promising directions that could engage educators in mutual planning of appropriate services for all middle-school students.

GUERRERO, J. K. (1995). *Serving the Advanced Middle School Learner in the Heterogeneous Classroom.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 18-22, 1995). ED385361

The Chapter 2-Carnegie Middle School Project was designed to develop educational programming and to provide appropriate services to advanced and gifted learners within the restricted middle school environment. This study examined the extent to which trained teachers could effectively implement advanced instructional techniques and curricula for gifted students in a heterogeneous middle school environment.

MCEWIN, C. K. & THOMASON, J. (Apr 1991) Curriculum: The Next Frontier. *Momentum*, 22(2) 34-37. EJ428991

Discusses the national movement to improve middle school education with respect to school reorganization, curricular issues, instructional strategies, and various ways of applying the middle school concept.

MCPARTLAND, J. M. (Feb 1990). Staffing Decisions in the Middle Grades: Balancing Quality Instruction and Teacher/Student Relations. *Phi Delta Kappan, 71*(6) 465-69. EJ402386
Staffing patterns can significantly affect educators' efforts to provide high-quality instruction and create positive teacher/student relations in the middle grades. State data and Johns Hopkins University survey results are used to show how staffing patterns serving one goal may interfere with accomplishing another goal. Corrective staffing measures are suggested.

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Discusses Joan Lipsitz's 1984 treatise on ideal middle level school characteristics. Many middle schools' creative approaches to programming and instruction (through interdisciplinary team teaching, interest-based activities, thematic schoolwide events, creative problem solving, and hands-on experience) and responsiveness to young adolescents' developmental needs embody the best features of effective gifted programs.

PLUCKER, J. A., & MCINTIRE, J. (1996). Academic survivability in high-potential, middle school students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 40*(1), 7-14. EJ527594
Qualitative methodology examined behaviors and strategies used by 12 high-potential middle school students when they did not feel challenged in school. Data analysis found students engaged in the following behaviors: selective attention, focused curricular involvement, involvement with others, humor, participation in extracurricular activities, and lack of effort/selected effort. Few teachers associated these behaviors with lack of challenge.

POOL, H., & PAGE, J. A. (Eds) (1995). *Beyond Tracking: Finding Success in Inclusive Schools.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation. ED386873
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SICOLA, P. K. (Fall 1990). Where Do Gifted Students Fit? An Examination of Middle School Philosophy as It Relates to Ability Grouping and the Gifted Learner. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 14*(3) 37-49. Special Issue: Educational Reform: Impact on Gifted. EJ420045
The emphasis of middle school philosophy on heterogeneous grouping is examined in relationship to the needs of gifted learners. Arguments supporting such grouping based on developmental needs of young adolescents, social discrimination, and the need for positive role models are considered. Cooperative learning is seen to be an unproven instructional method with this population.

STANLEY, J. C. (Feb 1985). A Baker's Dozen of Years Applying All Four Aspects of the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY). *Roeper Review, 7*(3) 172-75. EJ316881
Since its inception in 1971, the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth has expanded from a local program serving 19 mostly seventh graders to a national program with an enrollment of 1,600. This article discusses trends experienced during the 13-year period and their implications for the program's future.

STEVENS, M. (Mar 1992). School Reform and Restructuring: Relationship to Gifted Education. In: *Challenges in Gifted Education: Developing Potential and Investing in Knowledge for the 21st Century.* Columbus: Ohio State Dept. of Education. ED344408
This chapter reviews recent trends toward increasing emphasis on excellence in American business and applies these trends to school reform and restructuring in the context of gifted education.

TOMLINSON, C. (Spr 1992). Gifted Education and the Middle School Movement: Two Voices on Teaching the Academically Talented. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 15*(3) 206-38. EJ445874
Comparison of the fields of gifted education and middle school education indicates some major differences in such areas as organizing for instruction, how students learn, mainstreaming, delivery of instruction, affective needs, and the concept of giftedness.

TOMLINSON, C. (1994). Gifted learners: The Boomerang kids of middle school? *Roeper Review, 16*(3), 177-182. EJ481449
A variety of beliefs and practices central to middle schools may cause special difficulties for gifted learners. Such practices often focus on potentially competing goals of student competencies versus student excellence and include such practices as heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, and an absence of clearly defined middle school curricula.

TOMLINSON, C. (Jan-Feb 1995). "All Kids Can Learn": Masking Diversity in Middle School. Clearing House, 68(3), 163-66. EJ498923
Suggests that the cliche that "all kids can learn" validates educational practices that mask middle school learners' diversity. Presents case studies of two middle school learners, one student who could not read, and one who was gifted. Suggests that the hard truth is that middle schoolers differ greatly in the ways they learn and in their learning needs.

TOMLINSON, C. (Spr 1995). Deciding to Differentiate Instruction in Middle School: One School's Journey. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 39*(2) 77-87. EJ505157
A case study examines the experience of a middle school mandated to provide differentiated instruction for academically diverse learners and considers factors affecting movement toward differentiated classrooms. Clarity in defining the concept is discussed, along with administrative barriers, issues related to changing expectations, and need for professional support.

VAN-TASSEL-BASKA, J.; OLSZEWSKI-KUBILIUS, P.; & KULIEKE, M. (1994). A

Study of Self-Concept and Social Support in Advantaged and Disadvantaged Seventh and Eighth Grade Gifted Students. *Roeper Review*, 16(3), 185-191. EJ481451
This study investigated differences among intellectually gifted students of junior high age participating in full time intensive programs for the gifted. Findings indicated some differences based on ethnicity and gender, but most differences were observed between lower and higher socioeconomic groups, particularly for social support and social and behavioral self concept.

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ADDRESSING NEEDS

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strategies that have been used in Texas to assist them in this are:

Teacher as Scholar

Part of the professional development that was offered teachers in the Carnegie Project included a unit developed by Kaplan on *Teacher as Scholar*. This unit required that teachers respond to questions such as,

- What is the vocabulary of my discipline?
- Who are the individuals who impacted my discipline?
- What are some of the major resources of my discipline?
- What are the unanswered questions in my discipline?

The relationship between depth and complexity and the questions asked of teachers should be obvious. If teachers are going to use the language of the discipline with students, they must be familiar with its vocabulary. Teachers themselves must grapple with the unanswered questions of the discipline if they are to ponder them with the students.

Teacher as Scholar has another important element considered necessary when working with advanced and gifted learners. It required the teachers to become scholars themselves—to go back to the disciplines they taught and reexamine them. One of the outcomes of services for gifted students should be that they learn the attributes of scholarly behavior. Those attributes can best be taught by those who are scholarly themselves. By being asked to read the latest research in their disciplines and by examining the latest controversies being discussed by experts in their fields, teachers often remember the initial enthusiasm they had for their discipline. Because of the heavy workload most teachers have, it is difficult to go out and study the disciplines they teach. With Teacher as Scholar , this was made an "assignment" and many continued with that assignment long after it had been turned in to the project consultants.

Advanced Placement/ International Baccalaureate Vertical Teaming

Although the Carnegie Project did not use vertical teaming as a component of its professional development, Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate Vertical Teaming is another way Texas is enhancing academic instruction at the middle grade level.

Most secondary school educators are familiar with College Board Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. These programs typically are available for junior and senior students in high schools and most teachers at those grade levels are very articulate about the courses. However, it was found in Texas that many middle school teachers had never seen AP or IB questions and had little idea of what was expected for students who participated in those courses. This meant that students destined for those AP or IB courses often did not have the requisite skills and knowledge to perform well in the classes or on the examinations. To alleviate this problem, districts were encouraged to initiate vertical teams of middle and high school teachers. Vertical teaming certainly is not new. However, by focusing on knowledge and skills needed in AP and IB, the standard used in vertical teaming was raised considerably.

In the ideal vertical teaming situation, teachers from grades six through 12 in the same discipline meet together. Usually, one of the first things done is a review of questions from recent AP/IB examinations. Often, this is the first time middle grade teachers have seen the high standards that their students will have to meet in order to participate in these classes. Over the course of the meetings, teams analyze the vocabulary students will need on the examinations, the skills that are

required, and the scope of the content. This is then compared with the curriculum currently being taught to determine what knowledge and content is adequately covered and what is missing. Teachers discuss which components of the curriculum they most enjoy, which they are most comfortable teaching, and which they might need assistance in implementing. They determine when vocabulary, skills, and content will be introduced and reinforced and review appropriate assignments for students at the varying grades. Many times, these meetings result in unintended outcomes. Middle school teachers receive mentors in their discipline who can help them gain more knowledge in a risk-free setting. At the same time, many high school teachers enjoy the opportunity to discuss the needs of adolescents in the classroom, an area that has been emphasized at middle school for almost a decade.

Vertical teaming, sometimes called "pre-AP" or pre-IB" instruction, is not designed for gifted students alone. Indeed, its primary purpose is to improve and upgrade the education of all students. However, this improvement is the first step to enhancing services for advanced and gifted learners. If even a small component of what is normally done in gifted programs can be appropriated by the general school program, services for advanced students can be refined so they more adequately address the students' needs. Additional information on AP vertical teaming may be obtained from the regional College Board office, while information on the IB Middle Years Program may be obtained from the International Baccalaureate office in New York.

Developing teachers with good backgrounds in their disciplines is the first step to introducing depth into the middle school classroom. Because the middle school reform movement highlights instructional teaming of grade level teachers, adding complexity is easier to accomplish. If depth focuses on specific disciplines, complexity emphasizes greater understanding of multiple perspectives, cross-disciplinary connections, and changes that occur over time. Instructional teams usually are composed of, at a minimum, English, mathematics, science and social studies teachers on one grade level.

In *Turning Points*, it is stressed that these teachers should have the same students and should be given a common planning period during which they can jointly plan the curriculum for the students. During this planning period, teachers can examine links in their instruction to determine when elements of complexity can be seamlessly woven into their instruction. For example, if the history teacher is discussing the Industrial Revolution in class, the science teacher might emphasize how scientific discoveries led to the development of machinery that made industrialization possible. The English teacher might include readings from that period—readings that stressed both the wonder and the concern over the growing industrialization of society. The history and English teachers might work together on a unit that compares some of the writings on the industrial revolution with writings taking place currently on the information age, and ask students to ponder some of the unanswered questions related to "progress." By taking advantage of the instructional teams to increase the complexity of the curriculum, instruction can become much richer for all students.

Turning Points also encourages the use of flexible scheduling to enable students to have longer or shorter time periods with given disciplines. Indeed one of the rationales of the instructional team is to have teachers plan "science days," for example, so that more complicated experiments might take place. Because the four teachers included on the team have the same students, it also is possible to provide flexible scheduling for students who are advanced in an area. Just as the mathematics teachers might suggest that if a student is doing well in history he spend more time in mathematics to remediate a skill, a student who has a passion for science might be excused from English (if she is keeping up) so that she might spend more time doing an independent study project in earth science. Currently, flexible scheduling rarely benefits individual students, but it could and should be considered by teachers as a way to support the academic passions of young students.

The Carnegie Project in Texas did enhance education for all students; it was, however, less successful in adequately meeting the needs of highly advanced and gifted youngsters. This was true, not because of recommendations made by *Turning Points*, but because of misunderstanding of the recommendations. *Turning Points* does call for an end to tracking. So do most educators who are sensitive to the hardships tracking has caused for both gifted and non-gifted learners. However, *Turning Points* also stresses meeting the the individual needs of students. This means that the instructional needs of the gifted are just as important as those of students requiring extra assistance. While the Carnegie report suggests several instructional options, many educators, in the effort to end tracking, implemented both heterogeneously grouped classes and stressed, either overtly or covertly, the dominance of whole group instruction at the expense of any other form of instruction. This is neither suggested nor condoned by *Turning Points*.

Classroom Strategies

A heterogeneous class does not and should not mean one size fits all. Heterogeneous grouping can address many of the needs of gifted students if an array of teaching strategies and resources are employed. As a start, middle school classes should include texts and other materials from the high school so that more advanced learners have more sophisticated materials to use.

Learning centers should include activities appropriate for a broad range of students, possibly from fourth grade to twelfth grade, so that all students might use the same center while focusing on appropriately challenging tasks. Teachers might have some students reading to themselves while they work with other students on either challenging assignments ranging from below to well above grade level. It is particularly important for students to be learning or refining their abilities to work independently and small groups of students might be working in the library or with high school mentors on a variety of long-term assignments.

Students might be a part of two cooperative learning groups, Group A and Group B for this example. It is important to remember that one of the purposes of cooperative learning is to have students learn to work together harmoniously. Anyone who has worked with gifted students readily acknowledges that these students often need to learn this characteristic most when working with others of like ability. To assure that this happens, Group A might be a heterogeneous group of students and may be used when the objectives of an assignment make such groupings appropriate. Group B might be a group that is more academically homogeneous, when advanced and gifted students could work together, again based on the objectives of the assignment.

Grouping gifted students together still seems to be the primary point of contention when it comes to services in the middle schools. While clearly some academic needs may be met in the heterogeneous class, others needs can not. This is particularly true at the middle school level. Educators who work with adolescents know that being accepted by their peers is one of the critical needs of all middle school students. Many gifted students feel different and, in fact, are different in the way they learn and, as important, how they think about learning. Feelings of isolation often occur when they do not have the opportunity to interact with other students who have the same "affliction." It does not destroy the middle school concepts introduced by the Carnegie report to provide these students some time together. In fact, *Turning Points* strongly recommends student advisory periods, something that may be used to meet the affective needs of gifted learners.

In many cases, *Turning Points* was unfairly used as an excuse to end practices that administrators felt hurt students other than those who were gifted and in need of advanced level services. This led to confusion and confrontation when none was necessary. By carefully reading the report and by realizing that it advocates on behalf of all middle school students, including those who are gifted, *Turning Points* recommendations can be used both to strengthen the general school program as well as the services for gifted adolescents at the same time. It takes patience, hard work, and determination, but it can—and must—be done. ■

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BACCALAUREATE

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endeavor that continues throughout the MYP years; it demonstrates the skills and attitudes outlined in the common themes and embodies the objectives of the MYP. It may take the form of an essay, an artistic production, science experiment, an invention, or a presentation of business or management skill. The assessment process is closely supervised by the MYP teacher and is organized within the criteria of the IBO.

As a staff we had to look at our grading system and bring it into the framework. We also needed to look at the way we have and will be assessing our students giving them more responsibility for their own achievement. Program evaluation is a yearly mandate. A team of educators visits at least once during the MYP teaching cycle to assess the effectiveness of the program. Commendations and recommendations are part of the visit based on the IBO established criteria. We are learning to make decisions based on the effectiveness of what we do. This is a shift in how we look at ourselves and very closely aligned to the California and federal mandates which have recently been enacted.

Authorization

Authorization to become a MYP is granted by the IBO after a site has completed a self-study, received training, developed a curriculum which reflects the IBO criteria, and undergone a formal IBO review. Our authorization process included completing the 16-part application checklist and creating a thick report of our accomplishments in the planning stage. This process gave the opportunity for the staff and community to look at the total curriculum, plan the budget to reflect the curricular and other needs, review our resources, focus on student needs to accomplish the IBO objectives, seek broad community input for our campus, assess staff qualifi-

cations to plan for appropriate staff development, and assess financial and technical support for our endeavors. It has been a catalyst to develop a carefully planned and defined education for our students.

Program Requirements

The program calls for eight subject areas concurrently every year for every student. The eight required subjects to be taught in the program are English, foreign language, humanities (defined as history and geography), science, mathematics, the arts, physical education, and technology. Within our district we have a six period day. Court mandated bussing to achieve integration pretty much dictates our school day. By integrating technology and arts into all subjects the requirements for curriculum and teaching strategies were met. In our program the technology and art teachers integrate those subjects into other regularly scheduled courses within the school day. Technology is integrated primarily into the Language classes. Art is integrated into the history and social studies classes.

Teachers need to plan and deliver lessons to show all subjects within the areas of interaction outlined above. To accomplish this we spent the first year visiting other MYP sites and looking at the curriculum. The second year we planned and developed our curriculum within the MYP guidelines. The accreditation visit from the IBO took place during the third year. This last process is similar to other accreditation processes such as the WASC for high schools. At the end of these three years, the entire staff will have received training in either New York, Quebec City, Toronto, or Montreal from the IBO.

Student Response

Students are very enthusiastic about the MYP. We produced a video featuring Burnett students which was mailed to all incoming sixth graders. Personal testimonies on the tape reflect the positive attitude visitors may observe on the campus. "I have the opportunity to learn different subjects on a world-wide standard and I identify with students around the world," is a pretty strong statement from a middle school student. The value of success through work is reflected in the comment, "You have to really want to succeed to succeed in IB. Once you see the reward you can obtain, you know you can succeed." Students tell their audience on the video, and in person to campus visitors, that they learn how to study and how to learn and they feel prepared for going on to higher levels of study. Another student is quoted as, "School is tough, but you get plenty of support." That support comes not only from well-trained staff, but from classes that teach time management, critical thinking skills, advanced learning skills, and leadership. Students see school as a good place to be.

Staff Excitement

The staff is also excited about the program. They feel supported in their teaching efforts with the training they have received, the coordination and integration of curriculum, and the common objectives for teaching and learning. The positive attitude of the students and the high standards of the program energizes them and helps to provide fertile ground for their teaching efforts.

This program requires continued, careful, and coordinated planning. At Burnett, this task is carried out by Gail Uyehara, a former language arts teacher,who now coordinates the five-year MYP at Burnett Academy and San Jose High Academy. She works half time at Burnett for all students in grades 6,7, and 8, and half time at San Jose High Academy where the MYP is offered to student in grades 9 and 10. San Jose High Academy has offered the IB Diploma Program in grades 11 and 12 for several years. By expanding the program to include the MYP, students may be enrolled in the IB program for as many as seven years.

It is difficult to log the long hours spent by staff and community that brought us to this exciting phase of continued implementation. It is also difficult to document the combined efforts put forth by staff, community, and students. It is not difficult, however, to log or document the enthusiasm found on the Burnett campus and the excitement for learning that is present in every class. It is also not difficult to document the increased achievement of students who are having an academic experience that promotes enthusiastic, productive, and happy lifelong learners.

Note: Recent legislation in California has been passed to assist high schools in the amount of $25,000 annually to offset the cost of the IB Diploma Program. The MYP at this time does not receive any state assistance and must rely on local sources for funding.

A list of schools, the programs and guidelines, regional offices, regional representatives, and general information may be obtained from the North American and Caribbean Regional office at 200 Madison Ave., Suite 2301, New York, NY 10016, 212-696-4464 or the IBO website: www.ibo.org.

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For the latest news and information, and a vast array of gifted resources, check the CAG website at www.CAGifted.org.

ANALYSIS

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port their claim that advanced learners are not adequately served in regular classes. As he so frequently does, George uses loaded words in claiming that there is no need to "permanently remove and isolate gifted and talented students in rigid ability groups" (p.18).

PROPOSITION TWO

The implementation of GT programs frequently involves special grouping arrangements which provide GT students with learning privileges which are denied to the other middle school students, depriving these students of their proper share of the resources that the school has to offer. (p.20)

George argues that by 1994, "in virtually every state the average school district was becoming more and more financially desperate" (p. 20). He maintains that under such conditions, any money spent on programs for gifted students deprives the rest of the student body of badly needed resources. He also claims that classes for gifted learners are often smaller in size than regular classes, thereby taking more than their fair share of teaching resources. He cites no evidence for this claim, but in my 20 years of teaching in the middle grades, the opposite was usually the case; gifted classes were filled to capacity with "adds" at the beginning of the school year; and when gifted transfer students arrived during the year, school administrators believed they had no alternative but to place them in , and increase the class size of the gifted classes. We were finally able to persuade district officials to agree that no gifted class should be larger than the average for that grade level in regular classes; we considered that to be great progress.

George also accuses parents of gifted children of using political clout to unfair advantage; because of their contacts, they manage to have the best teachers assigned to and the best teaching strategies used in gifted education classes, again denying resources for the students as a whole (p. 23). Parents of gifted children will no doubt be surprised to learn how much power they have!

PROPOSITION THREE

In their eagerness to establish effective programs, some advocates for gifted and talented students have been guilty of less than professional activity in their interpretation of the evidence on middle schools, gifted programs, ability grouping, and related issues, and the recommendations which they issue for school programs related to that research. (p.26)

George describes the most "widely circulated" writings of supporters of gifted education as "uninformed," "premature in their conclusions," "unconcerned" about anything but the "narrow academic achievement of the smallest and already most privileged group of students in the school" (p. 26). He characterizes these supporters as selfish in the extreme and ponders why they are not working instead to solve the larger social school problems of segregation, racism, income inequality, and the disintegration of the cities (p. 27). He ends this section by stating that if advocates for gifted would show more concern for the school as a whole, others would be more responsive to their needs (p. 33). My own experience has been that parents of gifted children are often the most involved, participating in PTA activities such as school fund-raisers and band boosters. They are in for a another surprise to learn how selfish they are.

PROPOSITION FOUR

Educators have more urgent concerns which require the concerted energy and commitment of all of us. (p. 33)

The most astonishing statement George makes in this section is in reference to the U.S. constitution. He states:

> The state must do its best, with its limited resources, to provide a "uniform" education to all students, assisting those who need help to reach the minimum level of uniform standards. Asking the schools to organize and operate so as to provide enrichment beyond a curriculum which provides a uniform curriculum may be unconstitutional. (p. 34)

Renzulli and Reis Present Historical Narrative

After such a blistering attack, it was a relief to move on to the Renzulli and Reis chapter entitled, "Giftedness in Middle School Students: A Talent Development Perspective." While this chapter is twice the length of George's, its content is much more familiar to readers in the field of gifted education and will not be extensively presented. They open by acknowledging the existing controversy, stating that it has at times been acrimonious, and that their purpose is to attempt to reach a "rapprochement" between the parties. They also pay homage to the middle school movement as the one that "shows the greatest potential for real and lasting change" (p. 48).

Renzulli and Reis describe a broadened conception of giftedness as it has evolved from the narrow prescription of Terman's "top one percent" of students scoring on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale to the more inclusive perception held by most practitioners today. They acknowledge that the earlier, narrow definition was justly criticized, but note that newer definitions bring their own challenges, including the subjectivity involved in many measurements used today. This leads to a description of the similarities and differences of "schoolhouse giftedness" and "creative-productive giftedness." They explain that while both are important, the second permits the student to become a "first

hand inquirer" rather than simply a learner of prescribed lessons. They believe this change in emphasis is critical.

> For over 15 years we have advocated labeling the services students receive rather than labeling the students. We believe that our field should shift its emphasis from a traditional concept of "being gifted" (or not being gifted) to a concern about the development of gifted behaviors in students who have high potential for benefiting from special educational services. (p. 56)

Reasons for Differentiated Curriculum

They go on to identify and cite evidence for several reasons why curriculum differentiation is necessary including:

1. The trend in "dumbing down of textbooks" makes providing adequate challenge for advanced learners difficult, particularly when districts buy only one textbook, usually at grade level. Textbooks have decreased in difficulty by as much as 2 to 3 years in grade level from the levels at which they were written in the 1940's (p. 62).
2. Textbooks contain significant repetition of material, with only about 25% of the pages in a typical seventh and eighth grade mathematics text containing new content (p. 63).
3. There is a mismatch between student ability and instruction and assignments that are too easy encourage underachievement (p. 64).

Renzulli and Reis acknowledge that there is much controversy regarding ability grouping, particularly at the middle school level. Within-class grouping is common in elementary schools while honors and Advanced Placement classes are common in high schools. However, in the middle years, the philosophy is against ability grouping and in favor of heterogeneous classes. Parents of these middle school students worry that insufficient challenge at this time will leave their children unprepared for the rigors of high school, and beyond that for college. They go on to clarify the difference between ability grouping and tracking (i.e., tracking as a placement in which the child remains throughout the school years, and ability grouping which is flexible and changes according to need and over time) (p. 70).

Schoolwide Enrichment Model

This groundwork brings them to a description of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model which was first introduced by Renzulli more than 20 years ago. Briefly, for those not familiar with the model, it incorporates three types of learning:

Type I enrichment is designed to expose students to a wide variety of disciplines, topics, occupations, hobbies, persons, places, and events that would not ordinarily be covered in the regular curriculum. All students should be exposed to Type I enrichment.

Type II enrichment consists of materials and methods designed to promote the development of thinking and feeling processes; some enrichment activities are general such as creative thinking and problem solving, while some are specific and involve advanced instruction in an interest area selected by the students.

Type III occurs when students become interested in pursuing a self-selected area and are willing to commit the time necessary for advanced content acquisition and process training in which they assume the role of the firsthand inquirer, the one earlier described as "creative-productive" giftedness (pp. 96-97).

While the Schoolwide Enrichment Model may be considered by many in the field as only one of many possibilities for delivering services to middle level advanced learners, the presentation is persuasive and offered as a possible solution to the controversy and contention existing between the leadership and practitioners in the fields of middle school and gifted education.

George Responds

Professor George begins his response chapter in a much milder tone, complimenting Renzulli and Reis for their broadened concept of giftedness, their emphasis on talent development, and the reasonableness of the schoolwide enrichment model. But he quickly gets back to the business of lambasting supporters of gifted education. A considerable portion of this chapter is devoted to his characterization of "advocates" for gifted education whom he believes aim at destroying the public school system. He castigates Renzulli and Reis for continuing their "fusillade of negativity" against the American public schools.

> I refuse to give silent acceptance to the erroneous claims of the bankruptcy of the regular classroom. I refuse to believe that an adequate rationale for the education of gifted students cannot be developed except on the corpse of the regular classroom. I cannot endorse any proposed rapprochement between middle school educators and advocates for the gifted that is built upon acquiescence to what I regard as errant claims. (pp. 117-118)

At one point he likens good teachers to shepherds caring for their flocks whose tasks are "to move a herd of sheep forward at an appropriately rapid pace, while they encourage stragglers to keep up, search for those should stray, and look out for the dangers to the progress and safety of all" (p. 123). In my opinion, the image of gifted students (or any students) as sheep is not pleasant to contemplate.

George goes on to list 17 reasons to prefer heterogeneous classrooms, many of which have merit, and follows them with "special benefits to the gifted student" including:

- "overlearning is not always a bad thing
- the helper often learns more than the one being helped
- they will gain social acceptability
- they will have more realistic self-concepts (pp.137-138)

Almost incredibly he concludes with a section that specifies that academic rigor should never be allowed to be overbalanced by affective and social concerns, and that "We must never, ever, reduce the educational experience of gifted students to that of teacher's assistant, cooperative learning leader, or tutor" (p. 143). However, is it not precisely because these things happen on a regular basis that parents and leaders in gifted education see a need for special programs? Despite his argument that theoretically the needs of gifted students can be accommodated in regular, heterogeneous classrooms, it isn't happening.

Renzulli and Reis Respond

For their part, Renzulli and Reis systematically examine the four propositions originally delineated and proffer alternatives of their own and pointed examples of errors in George's evidence and/or conclusions. In a discussion regarding the "sanctity" of heterogeneous classrooms in the middle school movement, they suggest that it is usually not the classroom teacher or site principal who are, in fact, trying to respond to legitimate parental concerns, who hold fast to heterogeneous grouping; the real culprits are district officials or consulting zealots.

They also identify the additional programs a school would have to eliminate if it truly had no differentiated services which cost more than regular education, George's argument for eliminating programs for gifted learners. These would include:

- special education for those with physical and learning disabilities
- sports
- band and chorus
- extracurricular activities such as clubs (pp. 156–157)

Their ending statement reads as follows:

> Perhaps, instead of placing all the blame for the growing dissatisfaction with our schools on programs for gifted students, we could end this response with a call for unity, creativity, and a commitment to work together to provide challenging, rewarding learning experiences for all students in our schools while simultaneously realizing that these learning experiences will never be the same for everyone. (174)

Erb Provides Moderation

After completing this portion of the text, the question in my mind was, "Is this the best the National Middle School Association could do? With all their resources, don't they have someone less extreme to act as a spokesperson?" Fortunately, it was not the best they could do, for the publication is saved by the culminating chapter of editor Erb. Professor Erb brings a refreshing draught of moderation, restoring some confidence in responsible middle school leadership.

Professor Erb chooses to focus his remarks on the curricular and instructional aspects of the dilemma since the primary audience for the book is that of educators and this is the area in which they have the most influence and ability to make productive change. He then presents seven statements and recommendations, which can be supported by most teachers and parents of gifted learners. They include:

1. Current practice does not deal with (academic) diversity.
2. Identification of those who can benefit from services for the gifted needs to be inclusive, not exclusive.
3. Class and racial barriers that prevent participation in talent development activities need to be eliminated.
4. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model offers a promising path for encouraging talent development.
5. "Enrichment clusters" fit well with middle school curricular options.
6. Teacher collaboration will lead to students' needs being better met.
7. Integrated curriculum can be a useful vehicle for balancing deductive and inductive learning strategies. (pp. 180-182)

Professor Erb even suggests that some ability grouping may be acceptable. "From the perspective of the middle school concept, there is no reason to not have grouped classes within a heterogeneous team" (p. 191). He rightly points out that the strength of the middle school concept is that a teaching team can make this happen whereas it could be very difficult for teachers working in isolation.

Conclusion

Reading this book made me angry at times, but it was indeed provocative, and provided insights into issues of which I had not been fully aware. And many of the recommendations made, especially by Dr. Erb, are ones that gifted education teachers and parents should consider and profit from. Perhaps the inclusion of an extreme viewpoint can renew our commitment to providing appropriate educational experiences for gifted learners and to work toward a rapprochement with moderates in the middle school movement so that all students—including the gifted—will be better served. ■

MARGARET GOSFIELD is a former middle school teacher and gifted education program specialist for Ventura Unified School District. She is the immediate past president of CAG and the current *Communicator* editor.

CAG PUBLICATIONS

Advocating for Gifted English Language Learners

An Activity Handbook for Professional Development and Self-Study

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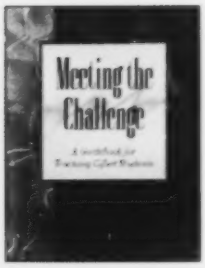

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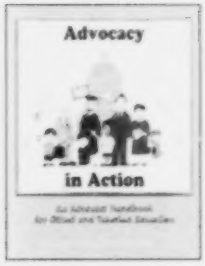
Here's a guidebook to answer teachers' most frequently asked questions about gifted education, plus lists of available resources, an easy-to-use annotated bibliography and CAG's comprehensive glossary.



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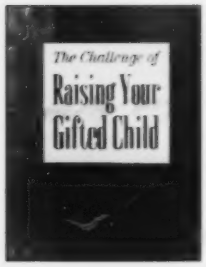

The Challenge of Raising Your Gifted Child

Item No. P-03 $12.00/copy

Here's a guidebook to answer parents' most frequently asked questions concerning gifted children, plus resources, both traditional and electronic, to make parenting easier.

Joining Forces

A Guide to Forming Support Organizations for Gifted and Talented Children

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COMMUNICATOR

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

VOLUME 30, NO 3, SUMMER 1999

ISSUE HIGHLIGHT

PARENTING THE GIFTED

Establishment and development of optimal learning environments for gifted youth require parents and educators to work together. In this issue we focus on:

- **Guidelines for parents at home and school**
- **Advocacy actions that work**
- **Effective use of parent volunteers**
- **The need to foster adult giftedness**
- **Federal and state career exploration programs**

UPCOMING ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Fall - Young Gifted
Winter - Math & Science
Spring - Identification
Summer - Developing Passion, Leadership, Ethics

"Pushy Parents"...Bad Rap or Necessary Role?

BY ARLENE R. DEVRIES

My Abigail, who has been grade-skipped to second grade, is in a classroom with a fine teacher whom I respect; but Abbey runs out of things to do ALL THE TIME! She is reading chapter books and there is no one with whom she can discuss them. I'm happy to help in any way, but meanwhile, there's my little petunia in the onion patch, marking time and suffering the slings and arrows of children who are not her intellectual peers and who have not learned respect for others."

This mother's concern is echoed over and over across the country, as parents of bright children are asking, "What can we do?" How much do you speak up for your child and how much do you back off? Are "pushy" parents getting a bad rap, or is this a necessary role?

Schools are a reflection of our society, and parents are a vital part of the culture. Tax paying parents have more power than educators. Without parent support and advocacy, gifted education would not survive. The universal goal of education is to meet the needs of students. Parents of gifted children, though representing a small percentage of the students, are minority stakeholders in the schools and deserve to have their children's educational needs met. It is vital that parents of gifted speak up for the needs of bright children. How can you effectively do that? Here are some tips.

ESTABLISH RAPPORT WITH THE SCHOOL

Be a friend to the school. Let teachers and administrators know you appreciate their efforts. When was the last time you wrote a note of appreciation to school personnel? Let them know you recognize their initiatives and the time they spend with your children. Be specific. Early in the year, write an "anticipatory praise" note to your child's teacher telling him or her how you are looking forward to your child being in their classroom because...of the excellent science activities they do; the gerbils they loan to student helpers for the weekend; or the myriad of paperback books available in their classroom. Share information about your child that might be helpful to the teacher. Express your willingness to discuss any concerns the teacher may have about your child, and offer to be of assistance throughout the year.

Parents can aid schools in delivering appropriate education in many ways. Some involve working directly with students. Others are behind-the-scenes activities that send the message to teachers that you care

See PUSHY PARENTS, 32

EC 307617

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PUBLISHED BY THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

The CAG Communicator is published four times during the year: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Opinions expressed by individual authors do not necessarily represent official positions of the Association. Subscriptions are available to non-members at an annual cost of $25.

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LETTERS

Unable to Find ERIC Website

In the spring issue on middle schools, an ERIC website was given for a "full list of readings," but I was unable to access this website. Is there another way for me to obtain this list of readings? I would appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Thank you for this wonderful issue of the *Communicator!* Keep up the fine job of sharing relevant and up-to-date information that educators and parents of gifted students need to be effective in achieving their educational goals.

Annie Muat

Editor's Note
Thank you for bringing this to our attention. That website has changed; you should now be able to find it at www.accesseric.org. Click on "sites" and then "disabilities and gifted education."

Delisle on Teaching Kids to Care

Thank you so much for your recent issue focusing on middle school gifted students. At present, we are home schooling due to an unfortunate experience with a local private school. But wouldn't it be wonderful if all our kids could have middle school teachers like Jim Delisle! His article on teaching caring was most inspiring. The literature suggests many gifted children have an unusually high degree of empathy. The strategies he suggests provide ways to empower them to use that quality and energy in ways that benefit both the community and themselves.

Hilary Cohen
Torrance, CA

Additional Copies Available

Your latest issue of the *Communicator* is particularly timely for me and my school…my school, a junior high school, is embarking on a new, more appropriate model of delivering the curriculum to our gifted students. Thus, this *Communicator* will be very relevant to all of us involved.

Now, here is my big request. Is there any way…I can get from 10 to 20 copies of the publication for my team of teachers and administrators?

Ernest Byarushengo
Park View Intermediate School
Lancaster, CA

Editor's Note
We do make a limited number of additional copies each issue. They may be purchased for $5.00 each plus tax and shipping. Call the CAG Office at 310-215-1898 to make your request.

Viva Mona Lisa with a Mustache!

I haven't written a fan letter since I was 10 years old and that was to some film star whose name I've forgotten. But I had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed Karen Buxton's hands-on curriculum activity (Spring 1999). It was well-written, organized, and contained just the right amount of detail—the daily schedule was especially helpful. The unique subject matter should inspire students as well as teachers. I loved it!

Sheila Madsen
Northridge, CA

The California Association for the Gifted serves its members in many valuable ways:

- **Institutes and conferences for educators and families**
- **Parenting strategies to nurture giftedness**
- **Advocacy to assure funds for GATE programs**
- **Publications about differentiated curriculum and contemporary issues affecting gifted students**

CAG is a mission-driven, volunteer administered, non-profit association.

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SEPTEMBER 17–19, 1999
Palm Springs Marquis Hotel

NOVEMBER 19–21, 1999
Hyatt Islandia, San Diego

JANUARY 21–23, 2000
Hyatt Regency, Sacramento

APRIL 7–9, 2000
Fairmont Hotel, San Jose

JUNE 2–4, 1999
Doubletree Hotel, Monterey

Board Meetings are open to the public. If a meeting is scheduled in your area and you wish to attend, please call the CAG office for specific information.

CAG SUMMER TEACHER INSTITUTES

AUGUST 16–20, 1999
Summer School for Teachers
Santa Barbara

AUGUST 21–22, 1999
Curriculum Writing
Santa Barbara

38TH ANNUAL CAG CONFERENCE

MARCH 3–5, 2000
"Century of Reflections—Honoring the Past, Imagining the Future"
Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

AUGUST 2–6, 1999
13th Biennial World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, "Gifted and Talented: A Challenge for the New Millennium," Istanbul, Turkey
For details, call 818-368-7501.

SEPTEMBER 24–26, 1999
Annemarie Roeper Symposium
"Psychological Approaches to Understanding the Gifted Self"
Chicago, Illinois
For more information, call 330-672-7935

NOVEMBER 3–7, 1999
National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)
"Pathways to the Millennium"
Albuquerque, New Mexico
For information, call 202-785-4268

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Last month I purchased a multi-function travel alarm clock and a portable hair dryer. Both came with extensive instruction manuals and diagrams as to how to make them work properly and what to do if problems occurred. I have all of the information I need to be a successful owner of these appliances and even an 800 number to call for additional help! Wouldn't it be great if children also came with a manual and diagrams containing full parenting instructions.

This week I read an interesting feature story in *Mac Addict* magazine focusing on the Macintosh Computer. Featured articles "4 Horrid Mac Disasters...and How to Survive Them," and "20 Ways to Keep Your Mac Up and Running" gave me volumes of information about what to do when the computer forgets what it really should know (system error), defiantly refuses to do what you ask (program crashes), can't find what you tell it to go and get (file not found), and last but not least, what to do when the system completely crashes and you see the "Sad Mac" on the screen. I am reasonably prepared to be a successful computer owner.

If only it were that easy to successfully parent gifted children—to have all the information and diagrams needed to solve their problems and to master all necessary parenting skills. But the young don't come with a manual or an 800-help number. Even with manuals providing complete guides to parenting behavior, there is still no guarantee that we will be perfect parents. Thousands of VCRs in homes and schools endlessly blink 12:00 in spite of instruction books. Water heaters come with instructions to drain them at least once a year. Most of us don't.

Parents want to be the absolute best loving parents they can possibly be. An intelligent instruction book would surely be helpful. Successful parents need to learn as much as possible about how to provide the best for their children. They need to know what the experts say about questions like how to support the perfectionist; how to deal with the bright child whose main mission in life is to challenge every thing and everyone; how to stimulate the underachiever/underproducer; and how a parent can be a successful advocate for their child at school.

Even with the best information, interactions between parents and children can be difficult and exhausting at times. To have the best responses to everchanging challenges on a daily basis will never be easy. But parents who are armed with good information and insights about gifted children are likely to have consistently more productive and positive reactions and responses to the actions and behaviors of their children.

There are valuable resources available. This issue of the *Communicator* provides a wealth of information about the questions and issues involved in raising gifted children as well as lists of additional resources and how they can be acquired. In addition, there are two publications that will be extremely helpful. The CAG publication, *The Challenge of Raising Your Gifted Child* is an excellent resource for effective parenting of gifted children. *Parenting for High Potential* is available on a subscription basis from the National Association for Gifted Children and contains informative articles for parents and activities for gifted children.

We cannot offer a comprehensive manual or an 800-help number, but we hope that this issue of the *Communicator* and the additional recommended resources will provide guideposts for the wondrous adventures and challenges that continuously occur during the successful growth of children into young adults. ■

MARGARET GOSFIELD

"Oh, Those Pushy Parents!" How well I remember the title of a CAG conference workshop I attended shortly after becoming coordinator of gifted and talented education in our district. As a teacher, I always found the parents of my gifted students to be the most supportive in the school and considered them a distinct asset. And despite the workshop title, the presenter did also, for she gave numerous suggestions for administrators and teachers to utilize the talents and skills of parents to enhance programs for gifted children.

The California Association for the Gifted recognizes the need for a partnership between home and school, and that is why the number of parent representatives is equal to that of educator representatives on its board of directors. Everyone benefits from our joint discussions.

We include parent concerns in every issue of the *Communicator;* but just as we focused on the teaching aspect of giftedness in the fall 1998 issue, we now focus on the parenting aspect and how the two interrelate.

The lead article by Arlene DeVries discusses the popular stereotype of "pushy GATE parents" and demonstrates the important role parents have as advocates. Continuing with the advocacy theme, Virginia McQueen gives practical advice as to what questions parents should ask about their local programs, what they should know, and the actions they may take in becoming effective advocates. In a complementary article, Glenda Thomas shows teachers how to utilize the talents of parents in the classroom with numerous examples and guidelines in her article, "Parents in the GATE Classroom."

Sharon Lind suggests that parents will better understand and support their gifted children once they come to terms with their own giftedness in her article, "Fostering Adult Giftedness," while perennial favorite, Judith Roseberry, gives at-home guidelines for living successfully with gifted children. In the same vein, Barry Ziff offers "Parenting for the New Millennium" with recommendations for helping gifted children become independent and self-sufficient.

There are several parent-to-parent items of interest. Sharon Freitas, the current chair of the CAG Parent Representatives presents an at-home activity in which children can learn and earn by clipping coupons for the family. Carol Danz describes her experience in gaining district approval for a part-time homeschool program for her two gifted children, while Kathy Patterson demystifies the term, "differentiated curriculum." Marcia DiJiosia does something similar in providing terms and definitions regarding testing procedures used in identifying gifted youth.

Two articles on career exploration should be of interest to both parents and educators. Louise Stevens of the U.S. Department of Education describes the federally funded program that includes a component for gifted students which encourages the exploration of and practice in possible career choices; she also provides examples of projects in progress. Victoria Bortolussi, dean at Moorpark Community College, follows with details of the California program and how to get involved.

Paul Plowman takes up the issues of labels and whether or not parents should tell their children they are "gifted." He points out both appropriate and inappropriate uses of labels. James Alvino, editor of *Parenting for High Potential*, shatters the myth presented recently by David Cohen which suggests that parents have small influence on the development of their children.

In the youth pages we publish our first Challenge winners! We are pleased to send $25 Barnes and Nobles gift certificates to Yesenia Becerril of Fontana, and Faryar Borhani of Irvine. We hope additional students will take up the new challenges in this issue; we'd especially like more entries from northern California!

Also in the youth pages is an interview with author/publisher Judy Galbraith, who answers questions posed by gifted students regarding their interactions with parents.

CAG and the *Communicator* staff consider the active participation of parents to be vital to the success of any program for gifted children. And now parents, we'd like to hear from you. What have you found useful, and what would you like to see in upcoming issues? ■

PARENT TO PARENT

Clipping Coupons

A Profitable "At Home" Economics Lesson

BY SHARON FREITAS

Living within a budget is always a challenge and more so if there is only one salary coming in. Many strategies such as buying food in bulk, joining a co-op, and growing a garden may help, but often they only engage the adult. Clipping, redeeming, and planning meals with coupons is a family activity with no age limits and many different individual benefits. Try one or more of these strategies; they have both obvious and not-so-obvious benefits that can be adapted to any size family with any age children.

Sixth grader Garrett Freitas, age 12, collects coupons for baby food and supplies for Madison, his 4-month-old sister.

It all begins with magazines and the daily newspaper—either your own subscriptions or ones you are recycling for an art project. Helping children cut out coupons neatly will enhance their small motor abilities as well as eye-hand coordination. Offer them a penny a coupon and you will soon have a great pile to sort through.

The second step works well with preschool age or older children. Have them pick out coupons with pictures of food items that they like to eat; take those with you to the store and help the children match the coupons to the boxes, cans, or packages on the shelf. Be sure to take only the ones you want to purchase because after the children find the products, they will naturally want to take them home and enjoy them.

The third step is to encourage the now "coupon empowered children" to select and purchase nutritious foods; this opens the door to discussions about the necessary food groups, menu planning, and even meal preparation.

As children grow older, there are many additional ways to utilize coupons, especially if they wish to earn extra money for special projects. Have your children set up their envelopes with coupons that are "cents-off" foods that the family normally eats; check them against the weekly grocery ads and decide together which items are needed for the family meals. Set up a contract with your children (they like it to be in writing) to encourage them to find the items that match the coupons which you will purchase. After the children help put away the groceries, review the register slip with them to determine the amount of money saved by the redeemed coupons; credit that amount to your children's special projects saving accounts.

This works well with grades three and above, and also can be a subtle way to reinforce math skills if the children write down the amounts and add them up on paper. Don't pull out the family calculator!! This can be extended to include the use of coupon items when children wish to help plan menus and cook meals for the family as part of a scouting badge requirement.

Using a coupon to introduce a new food to the family can also be fun as well as broadening the family palate. Many stores also advertise that they "double" the face value of the coupon so this can be very lucrative; I have seen children earn $12 to $15 during one market visit because they planned and prepared well in advance.

The not-so-obvious lessons are many, including how to live within a budget, how to plan nutritious and appealing meals, and learning the value of advanced, written preparation. The time children and parents spend together with this project is priceless. The lifelong lessons learned from this activity will be remembered when the child becomes a parent and the process begins over again.

SHARON FREITAS lives in Sacramento and is the mother and grandmother of many gifted children. She is the current chair of CAG's Parent Representatives.

Sample Contract

Guidelines for Coupon Redemption

- Coupon must match a nutritious food item that the family normally eats
- Expiration date must be valid
- Note use of coupon on shopping list

If these conditions are met, the value of the coupon(s) will be paid to:

_____ _____ (child's signature)

_____ by (parent's signature)

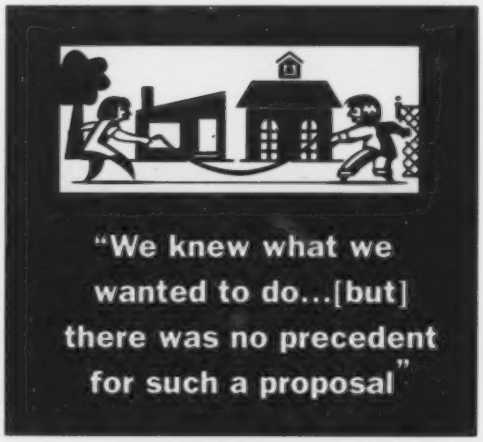
_____ on (date of payday)!!!

The Best of Both Worlds

Part-time Public School and Part-time Homeschooling for Elementary Gifted Children

BY CAROL DANZ

Imagine being granted the opportunity to provide enrichment for your gifted children at home one or two days a week, while they continue to receive the benefits of their public school experience the rest of the time. Recently I received approval for such a proposal, and to our delight, we now provide the best of both worlds—part-time public schooling and part-time homeschooling—for our elementary age daughters.



"We knew what we wanted to do...[but] there was no precedent for such a proposal"

As a parent and former high school teacher, I thought our children would benefit academically from homeschooling. I also believed they could benefit from the socialization and basic instruction provided in their public school classrooms. Since I have a high school teaching background, I did not feel adequately competent in elementary education methodology, and therefore did not choose to pursue homeschooling as a full-time option for my children. As a result of our successful proposal, we now provide our children with the best of both worlds by keeping them at home one or two days per week for at-home enrichment. It "buys time" for our children to receive the "gifted education" they are unable to receive at school.

As many parents of high ability children repeatedly attest, there are numerous frustrations facing gifted youth in classrooms where their needs are not addressed. Our own children were expressing frustration because their lessons provided little of "anything new." They also complained of boredom since they mastered classroom content in a short period of time, but were not provided with added enrichment activities. Without that necessary classroom enrichment or differentiation, we believed our daughters were destined to mostly grade-level learning experiences and deprived of learning which matched their abilities and interests. They were also too young to participate in our district's very limited after-school G/T (Gifted/Talented) enrichment program.

DOING OUR HOMEWORK

We knew what we wanted to do. However, we discovered there was no precedent for such a proposal. In discussion with the head of the California Department of Education's office for gifted education, we were told that our request for an IEP (Individualized Educational Program) for our gifted children was reasonable. In fact, some districts do provide IEPs for gifted children, but they are usually in districts where no G/T program is in place. In those districts, IEPs are usually administered to gifted students on a part-time basis by district personnel. In our own district, IEPs applied only to special education students and no provision for IEPs for gifted children was in place. With this information in hand, we pressed on with what we knew we wanted to do for our own children, and we began to prepare a formal proposal.

It was necessary to first gain an understanding of the provisions within the California Education Code that would allow parents to administer IEPs to their own gifted children. The Deputy General Counsel for the California Department of Education informed us that our proposal could come under the Independent Study clause (Education Code Section 51745 and following; Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 11700 and following).

The Counsel's e-mail memo to us stated:

> Independent study is an alternative to classroom instruction. It allows students to carry on their education outside the classroom based on a written agreement. The agreements include requirements consistent with the local school district's course of study, and general supervision of each pupil's independent study by a credentialed employee of the school district in which the child is enrolled. A child may pursue their (sic) studies through this alternative full-time or part-time, depending on the school district's policies, the child's interests/needs and certainly, abilities. A district should assess the child to determine whether independent study would be workable for the child and his or her situation. If the child would be able

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THE GREATEST MYTH OF ALL

BY JAMES ALVINO

It may be the most insidious myth of all. The one advanced by researcher David B. Cohen in *Stranger in the Nest* (Wiley, 1999), which suggests that parental influence on a child's personality, intelligence, and character is minimal at best. It should make even the most convicted advocate of gifted education shudder, as it ultimately implies that cream rises to the top, that gifted kids can—and will make it on their own.

Cohen presents three "guiding hypotheses" with compelling evidence, mostly from studies of identical twins:

- The influence of heredity and prenatal life—nature—is surprisingly strong.
- The influence of rearing and family life—nurture—is surprisingly weak.
- The effects of nature and nurture are surprisingly perverse.

As a movement within the larger symphony of "Nature vs. Nurture," Cohen's score strikes some familiar chords. Nature and nurture work together to some degree, but inborn potential limits parental influence; biology constrains rearing. It's not one or the other, Cohen asserts: "Neither genes nor rearing alone can fully account for why individuals differ more or less in their talents, temperament, character, and preferred behavior."

So far, so good. But Cohen is a genetic determinist whose stance on the nurture side of the debate threatens the very foundation and purpose of gifted education and magazines like *Parenting for High Potential* to help parents make a difference in their children's lives. Nurture clearly takes a back seat:

> Parents can help a sensitive child to be more secure, a hyperactive child to be more self-controlled, even a talented child to be more fulfilled—but only when the biological imperative underlying these traits isn't so great as to counteract the effort to persuade and instruct.

In other words, children either have it or they don't. If they do, fine; we can help them. If they don't, forget it.

Cohen points out that genes bias individuals, that "Strong genetic dispositions tend to restrict the range of likely or even possible behavior." While there is nothing radical in this statement, he takes it to the next level in asserting that genes powerfully influence not only intelligence, personality, and psychological adjustment, but also attitudes, religious values, vocational choices, and even hobbies. Is there nothing left for parents to do?

"Parenting is essential to a child's survival as a person," Cohen says, "but it has much less impact and even less predictable effect than we have imagined on the development of intelligence, personality, and character, all of which makes a child unique." The problem here is both in the philosophy and the research design. Isn't a person's "survival" on multiple levels

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a product of intelligence, personality, and character? How does one separate these variables from the concept of "survival," either philosophically or empirically?

In not wanting to acknowledge that a child may be like clay in a potter's hands—the extreme nurture view—Cohen takes the extreme nature view: Even our environments, he contends, are partly genetically determined. Kiss free will goodbye, a concept ruled out as "obsolete" in the face of "genetic evidence" derived from his studies of twins and adoptees. He also appears to ignore the impact of environment, including child-rearing, on the chemistry and biology of the brain.

It is here that Cohen's theories, regardless of the validity of his data, begin to lose their credibility. It seems difficult—indeed contradictory—to maintain genetic determinism with its absence of free will, on the one hand, and to assert, on the other, that "Genetic influence affects… our self-determination, our ability to create as well as react to environments, including family environments."

This is the essence of Cohen's second hypothesis, that genes, not parents, are responsible for children's resiliency, for their ability to bounce back from early adversity. Genes are also responsible for the "proactive qualities of childhood—the self-generating and creative qualities which mean that children, far from passively experiencing their worlds, actively create them in mental life and in the social arena."

Call it the greatest paradox in the unfolding of psychological development: Genetic determinism and its lack of free will are at the root of creativity, including its spontaneous energy and novelty, and the choices we make in actively creating and experiencing our worlds. That's a lot to swallow.

The fact is, Cohen is correct in concluding that children actively create their worlds in mental life, but this is precisely what free will is: The ability to think whatever we want. Reality, and the existential choices we make in shaping our reality, is an outpicturing of our thoughts. The Indian sages have long taught that "The world is [literally] as you see it."

Cohen's third hypothesis—that perversity characterizes the effects of both nature and nurture—is again rooted in genetics. He claims that "A major reason for this seeming perversity of psychological development is that a child inherits a random half of each parent's genes, and these will interact differently with the different prenatal environment of each pregnancy." Out of this genetic cauldron comes autonomy, inventiveness, and "unpredictability" of personality, which Cohen again says indicates the limits of parental influence. (This principle probably could be used to explain the student massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, and why everyone seemed clueless and dumbfounded over what motivated the perpetrators of this tragedy.)

The problem with the assertion of unpredictability is that it undermines the basis of scientific discovery, that being the principle of cause and effect. It probably is the case that personality is unpredictable, but if true, it means that neither nature nor nurture can fully explain in a causal sense the behavioral outcomes associated with psychological development. And it may mean that research findings based on the data of genetic anomalies (identical twins) are not projectable across the general population.

With cause and effect and unpredictability at odds, we are left with freedom, with choice, with differing degrees of motivation, with memories—good and bad—that shape our worldview, with experiences that have been absorbed into the fabric of our lives, woven tapestries rich in meaning that simply are not reducible to the laws of Mendel. This is our *experience*, is it not? And whether or not it turns out that the supposed foundation each of us posits in explaining our world and who we are is illusory, it matters not in terms of the meaning, the direction, and the energy we give to our lives and to our children.

The law of cause and effect is real—just not as an expression of genetic determinism to account for the diversity of psychological development. Far more fundamental is the principle of cause and effect as it applies to behaviors and relationships, as it applies to nurture. In short, all actions have consequences—sometimes unseen, sometimes unintended—that we must live with by virtue of exercising our free will. This is how the universe works. This is what we should keep in mind as we raise our gifted children, and this is what we should convey to our children in helping them exercise and inform their decision-making.

"In short, all actions have consequences—sometimes unseen, sometimes unintended—that we must live with by virtue of exercising our free will"

From this vantage point, parents can make a significant difference in the lives of their children, can still exercise significant "parental influence." I wouldn't throw in the towel just yet.

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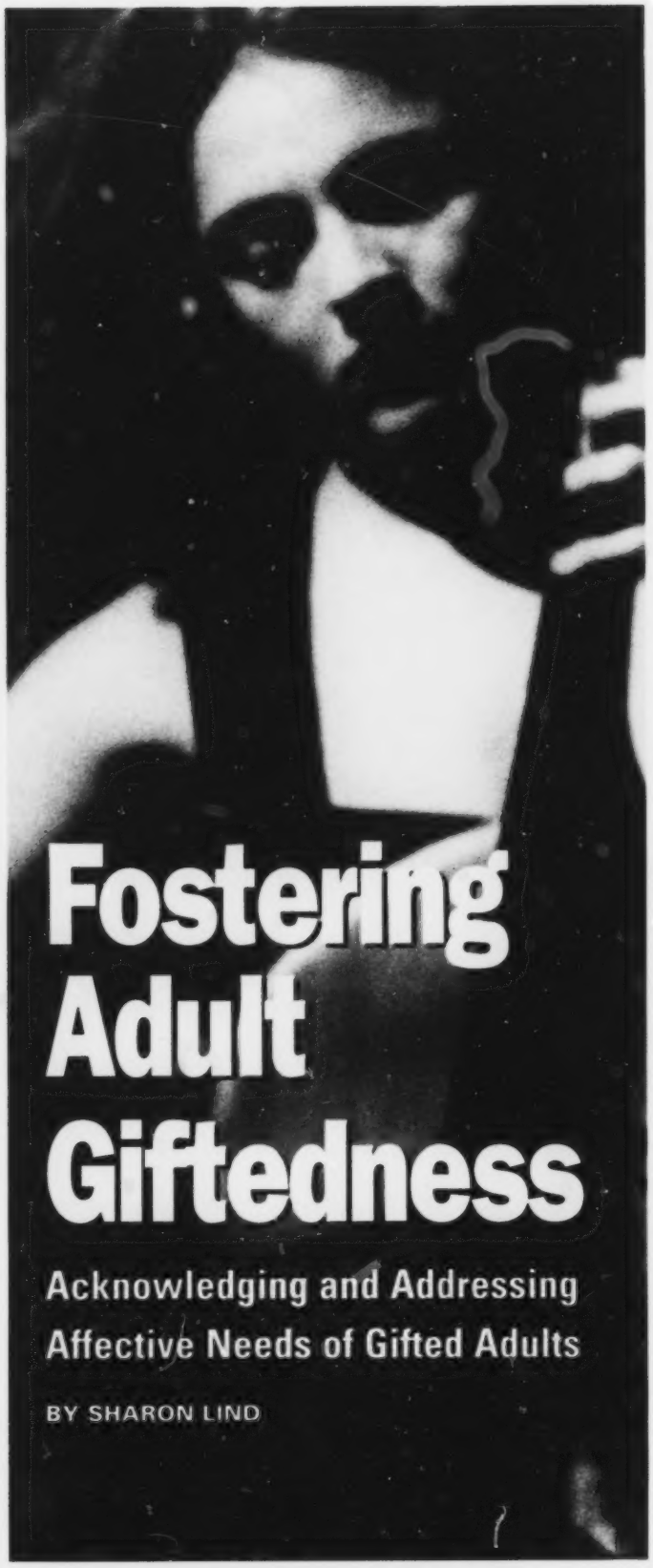
DR. JAMES ALVINO is Executive Director of the United States Academic Decathlon. **"The Greatest Myth of All" is copyright material from the June 1999 issue of *Parenting for High Potential*, a publication of the National Association for GiftedChildren (NAGC), Washington, D.C. This material may not be reprinted without permission from NAGC.**



Fostering Adult Giftedness

Acknowledging and Addressing Affective Needs of Gifted Adults

BY SHARON LIND

Recently I had the pleasure of participating in an Internet conference with parents in Australia about the social and emotional needs of gifted children. During the two weeks of dialogue one parent, Michelle, said, "My own experience (and I suspect that of many other parents of gifted children) is that my awareness of giftedness came about after becoming a parent. In the process of learning about how to respond to the child's needs, we parents often find ourselves discovering many things about ourselves and perhaps even dealing with a few painful memories of our own childhood experiences."

She went on to say, "It's something I've noticed in my discussions with other parents—while many of them accept their child's giftedness and associated traits, they seem to be in 'denial' about their own giftedness, or at varying stages of dealing with it."

Michelle's comments are not unusual. Frequently parents and teachers express concerns about fostering growth in gifted children while dealing with the often painful process of coming to terms with their own giftedness and potential. It is difficult—a sort of developmental double-whammy—to go through your own developmental phases while at the same time teaching, guiding, and/or parenting gifted children.

Giftedness in adults can be viewed through a number of lenses. For this article, I want to focus on five key affective needs of gifted adults: acknowledging your own gifts; nurturing your identity development; giving yourself permission to be a growing, changing, imperfect person; taking advantage of and coping with overexcitabilities; and learning practical coping skills. In order to improve self-esteem and self-efficacy, it is vital for adults, as well as children, to have a firm affective foundation from which to act. By focusing on these five needs, adults can begin to foster their own giftedness and will become better role models for gifted children by showing them the importance and value of addressing personal strengths and needs.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR OWN GIFTS

The first step towards building a strong social and emotional base is to recognize and acknowledge one's own strengths or gifts. For many adults this facet of who they are has either gone unnoticed, been ignored, or was not expressed for cultural reasons. So, if you have not already done so, take time over the next few days to list your personal assets. Look at those around you whom you believe are gifted. What characteristics do you share with them: intense curiosity, keen sense of humor, creative or artistic bents, sensual or emotional sensitivity, intense imagination, deep concerns about social issues, tenacious academic abilities, superior interpersonal skills, etc? If this is a difficult task for you,

ask your partner, friends, children, family. Seek their input and validation.

The next step is to be honest with yourself and then open with others about your own concerns or confusion surrounding your giftedness. How do you feel being different from your friends, family, cohorts at work? How do you feel about talking openly about your strengths? How do your gifts enhance your life? How do they make your life more complicated? Self-evaluation, asking these questions, should enable adults to feel more comfortable with who they are and to become more willing to share themselves with others. This openness leads to modeling for children, pride in our assets, and a willingness to work on our weak points.

NURTURE YOUR OWN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Often gifted adults, out of compassion or obligation, focus on the development of their children, students, or partners while ignoring their own. As Michelle said, "They seem to be in 'denial' about their own giftedness, or at varying stages of dealing with it." This leads not only to inappropriate modeling for children, but also to unmet needs as an adult.

The key is to take the time to find reinforcement, encouragement, nurturing of ones strengths and passions. Andrew Mahoney (1998) has described four primary constructs which are the "underpinnings that shape and influence identity" (p. 223). See figure 1.

Making an active effort to meet your needs for validation, affirmation, affiliation, and affinity, is instrumental to fostering adult giftedness.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO BE A GROWING, CHANGING, IMPERFECT PERSON

Another facet of the process of meeting your own needs is to give yourself permission to be a person in a growth process. Try to accept personal imperfections and recognize that growth tends to move through peaks and valleys rather than on a straight progression upwards. Many gifted individuals are born with a sense or understanding of how things (ideas, morality, justice) should be. They see more possibilities, imagine greater outcomes, and have loftier ideals than others. They can see from an early age what perfection looks like. As a result, their peers, teachers, and significant others hold inappropriate or overly inflated expectations for them. These expectations, whether directly stated or implied, are sensed by the individual and he or she responds by trying to be perfect in order to meet the expectations of others. But achieving perfection is difficult and often unrewarded by the outside world. So it is paramount for gifted individuals to try to develop realistic and satisfying expectations for themselves and others.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AND COPE WITH OVEREXCITABILITIES

Understanding the innate characteristics which may accompany giftedness also helps to foster adult giftedness. The work of Kazimierz Dabrowski (1902-1980) provides an excellent framework in which to understand the supersensitivity or overexcitability frequently found in the intellectually or creatively gifted. Dabrowski described overexcitabilities (OEs) as a heightened ability to receive and respond to stimuli. Found to a greater degree in the creative and gifted, overexcitabilities are expressed in increased sensitivity, awareness, and intensity, and represent a real difference in the fabric of life and quality of experience. Dabrowski identified five areas of intensity—psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional.

A person may possess one or more of these OEs. Individuals with these characteristics view the world through a different lens. They are often perceived as people who overreact or are just too intense. It is this turbulent, complex and rich inner experience that can be a blessing or a burden to the intense, gifted person and those around them. Adults may need to deal with and take advantage of their intensities and help turn any dissonance into more of a symphony. (Please see Lind, 1994 and Lind, 1996 for additional information.)

As a beginning, accepting that OEs are hereditary and are part of a person's essence has a remarkably freeing and validating effect. The next step is to recognize that individuals with discrepant OEs sense they are speaking in different languages, or operating from different perspectives, or dealing with different cultures relative to their colleagues, friends or family members. They are out of sync. Feelings of alienation and misinterpretation are experienced by both the overexcitable and the non-overexcitable individuals within a relationship. This mismatch within a family or at work, or in personal relationships can lead to difficulties.

- Mutual respect, credibility, and understanding may be hard to establish or maintain because there is a lack of shared experience or reality.

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Mahoney's Primary Constructs

Validation	Personally acknowledging one's giftedness
Affirmation	Gaining continual reinforcement and acknowledgement about one's giftedness from others
Affiliation	Allying oneself with others of similar interests, passions, overexcitability, talents, etc.
Affinity	Developing a sense of calling or purpose —connecting oneself with the world

Figure 1. Primary constructs that shape and influence identity

PARENTING
for the
NEW MILLENNIUM

BY BARRY ZIFF

As young boys growing up in the 1940s and 50s, my brother and I always understood our roles in the family and the rules we were to obey without question. At school, we were expected to always do our best work, to be friendly and courteous, and listen respectfully to our teachers. At home, we each had specific chores and responsibilities. We were expected to keep our room clean and tidy, set the table for dinner, and feed the dogs. As we grew older, we became responsible for completing more chores. Our parents did not provide special praise or rewards for completing our daily tasks. We were usually recognized with a simple, "Thank you."

Parenting in today's fast paced world seems to be much more complicated. Often, children have schedules that are as busy as their parents. Parents often give the responsibility of raising their children to grandparents, child care-givers, and teachers. Raising an individual to be happy and successful is not an easy task for two parents who are committed to doing an effective job, and even less promising for those who abdicate the responsibility to others. For most people, parenting will be the most challenging continuous activity they will encounter in their lives. My experience has led me to believe that there are no simple or immediate solutions to the many questions and issues that concern parents today. The needs of children and families vary greatly from community to community and from family to family. However, there are basic concerns common to all parents and especially those who are attempting to parent and educate the gifted child.

Exhaustive research has demonstrated that a child's talents, abilities, and potential will be lost if not nurtured, and parents have the greatest opportunity to stimulate those inherent abilities, especially at an early age. Schools and teachers can and do make a significant difference in the lives of children. However, parents have the ultimate responsibility to create an atmosphere which will produce a child who has a positive attitude and is capable of being successful in today's challenging and competitive world. Parenting a child to become a happy and successful adult becomes the ultimate challenge.

"...by providing quality time for your children you will develop a close relationship. It is important to play together."

PARENTAL SUPPORT A MUST

Many parents raise their children as they were raised, or a fantasized version of the actual situation. Some parents rely on instincts, and some live from day-to-day and situation-to-situation with no guidance, guidelines or thoughtful goals. All parents have special hopes, dreams, and aspirations for their children, and when a child does not live up to those expectations, the child and the parents experience a great deal of stress. To live and learn is the natural order for all children. Learning occurs in all situations. We need to remind ourselves constantly that children are not all the same, nor do they respond to situations in the same manner.

We can help our children by allowing them to be involved in satisfying experiences which help to build self-confidence. In fact, the best preparation for adulthood is to experience a satisfying childhood in which children learn to function independently and acquire confidence in their own abilities. This may mean that children will encounter difficult situations which they must learn to resolve. When parents protect their children from difficult situations, they do not allow their children the opportunity to develop strategies and learn how to deal with and overcome problems. Allowing children to resolve problems helps to build self-esteem.

Self-confidence is not an inherited characteristic, but rather, something we all learn from our experiences. From our earliest moments of life, we begin to accumulate information about ourselves and our world. These early experiences play an important role in forming the kind of people we become. Each new experience is interpreted in light of all the beliefs and attitudes we have accumulated within our perception of "self." By the time your children reach school age, their self-concepts are already well-formed by all the experiences they have encountered. This is why it is so important that parents play an active role in their childrens' lives during these sensitive early years of development.

When my daughters were young, we went to the local park on a regular basis. On one such occasion my older daughter asked me to buy her an ice cream cone from a vendor who happened to be pushing his cart nearby. I told her that she would need to buy the ice cream herself. We discussed how much the chocolate swirl cone cost and how much change she should receive from the money I gave her. I walked with her over to the vendor and stood by her side as she made her request. She thanked the vender and asked if she could buy her sister a cone. The following week, I stood behind her when she purchased the ice cream. Each time, I commented on how well she dealt with the situation. In the following weeks, she was able to go to the vendor without my support. She was proud of her ability to be so independent and capable of asking and getting what she wanted. These and other such experiences contributed to her becoming a successful and competent individual. As a grown woman, she is very resourceful, independent and capable. By taking advantage of common everyday experiences, we can help our children learn to become independent and responsible.

WHOSE JOB IS IT?

To provide an example of parenting behavior that produces dependent and underachieving children, I share the following situation. A mother was in the act of tying her 11-year-old daughter's shoelaces. I commented that the daughter was old enough to tie her own shoelaces. The mother responded that because she was the mom, it was her job. This was her job when her daughter was a toddler. Her daughter needed a different kind of support now due to her age and maturity. This incident reflects the overly involved parent. As parents, we need to be intimately involved in our children's lives; however, our involvement needs to be appropriately moderated by the personality and maturity of our children.

"...the best preparation for adulthood is to experience a satisfying childhood in which children learn to function independently and acquire confidence in their own abilities."

PRACTICE DECISION MAKING

Parents can provide their children with many opportunities by sharing the responsibility for making decisions. Asking questions like, "Do you want to wear the blue or green dress today?" helps children learn to make decisions and become responsible. The parent in this situation has already set the limits and expectations by providing choices which are

See NEW MILLENNIUM, 37

CAG PARENT REPS' TOP TEN

The eleven regional representatives on the CAG Board of Directors prepared the following list as their top recommendations for parents seeking resources for assisting them in parenting their gifted children.

Websites

www.CAGifted.org
California Association for the Gifted (with links to other sites for gifted)

www.accesseric.org:81
ERIC (articles on gifted children)

www.amazon.com
Amazon (book finder)

Books

Guiding the Gifted Child
by James Webb, Elizabeth Meckstroth, & Stephanie Tolan, 1982, Gifted Psychology Press

Children the Challenge
by Rudolf Dreikurs, 1964, Plume/Penguin

The Challenge of Raising Your Gifted Child
by the California Association for the Gifted, 1998

The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide
by James Delisle & Judy Galbraith, 1998, rev. Free Spirit Publishing

Magazines

Parenting for High Potential
produced by the National Association for Gifted Children

Imagine
produced by Johns Hopkins University

Publishers

Free Spirit Publishing

Gifted Psychology Press

SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted - a model for parent discussion groups)

Talent Search (for summer programs for gifted students)

"You're Going to Take a Test..."

BY MARCIA DIJIOSIA

"You're going to take a test..." These are words that can strike fear in the hearts and minds of most people. Testing is usually performed in order to make decisions about the individual. There may be instructional or curricular decisions, selection for employment, placement or classification decisions, and sometimes personal decisions. Testing allows for additional information in a measured way so proper judgments can be made in an objective manner.

The vocabulary that surrounds assessment is often complicated and foreign. When the teacher, counselor, or school psychologist reports scores to the parent, a look of bewilderment often crosses the parent's face. The following is a quick glossary of terms that may aid in better understanding the testing process.

ability testing
Describes what a person has learned (**achievement testing**) or indicates the mastery of specific skills (**content or criterion-referenced tests**)

aptitude testing
Predicts future performance in an area; usually used for selection and placement decisions for jobs

average score
The score that represents the middle of all of the group; the **mean** or average of the central tendency or general pattern of a score to appear; usually the mean is represented by a score of 100 or a 50%ile

bell curve
Describes a normal distribution of scores within the population; the pattern follows a format that shows the greatest numbers fall within the middle range and drop off in numbers as they reach the outer ends on either side

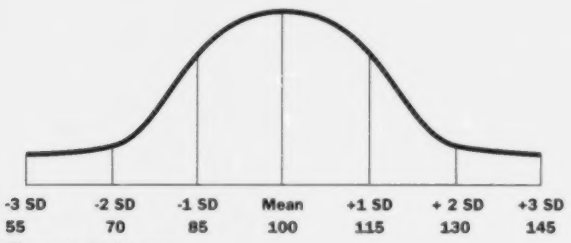

Figure 1. Bell curve

intelligence tests
Were used to determine the IQ or intelligence quotient by dividing the mental age multiplied by 100 by the chronological or actual age; standard scores are now used so that the same mean and standard deviation (see below) can be used for all age groups; a high IQ score does not ensure success as other influences are instrumental in determining the outcome;a score of 100 is an average score, 120-129 is superior and 130 and above is very superior; **crystallized intelligence** looks at what a person has been exposed to and learned up to a finite point in time, while **fluid intelligence** looks at how a person learns, reasons and processes information

norms
when a person or group is compared to a general reference group; most often stated as an age, grade, percentile or standard score norms; when norms are used in testing, the test is referred to as **norm-referenced**; most reliable when a variety of socioeconomic levels, ethnicities and geographic areas are used and with good representation in numbers

percentage vs. percentile
percentage refers to the number of correct answers as a fraction of all problems or tasks presented, percentile is the percentage of the group that was surpassed by the individual's score

raw score
usually the total number of correct answers earned on the test before being converted into a standard or percentile score

reliability
the accuracy of a particular testing measure; it must be consistent and have the ability for the results to be reproduced

standard deviation
the measure of the distance from the mean or average score; usually 15 or 16 points, depending on the test; a child is usually considered gifted when scoring two standard deviations above the mean and highly gifted at three standard deviations (see Figure 1)

stanine
standard scores divided into parts numbered one through nine and a mean of five

test environment
the setting and general attitude presented to the person being assessed in order to elicit the best and most accurate test results

validity
the degree to which a test provides information which is relevant to the decision

Armed with a glossary of terms, the layperson is better able to sift through the information reported on standardized achievement tests and other assessments performed upon their children. Recently, achievement tests have been reported in the news as teachers will be graded on the effectiveness of their instructional meth-

ods by the gains their students make each year. Formerly, achievement tests were administered in order to ascertain the progress a child had made during the school year for curricular and placement decisions. Now it is becoming a political tool for ranking schools and grading the effectiveness of teachers.

A variety of methods are used to determine eligibility for GATE placement. Usually an ability test is administered to predict the student's capacity to succeed in an advanced educational program. The main focus of the program will dictate the type of test given. Some districts may look for high-achieving students while others search for students with higher order thinking skills and abstract reasoning ability.

Within the classroom, teachers construct tests that show how much a child has mastered about a particular subject. Pretests help with grouping of students and compacting of the curriculum. Culminating tests aid teachers in knowing who has need of additional attention and which students are able to move on to new material.

During a person's lifetime, many testing situations will be presented. If emphasis is placed upon providing a comfortable testing environment and fair measures are utilized, the information needed will be accurate and reliable. That is when testing becomes a positive and worthwhile experience. ■

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Living Successfully with your Gifted Youngster

BY JUDITH ROSEBERRY

High level intelligence makes demands upon gifted youngsters. Behaviors result from these demands that certainly have implications for those of us who live with or teach bright young people.

In the school setting we can develop programs and curricula to meet these "demands" or characteristics of the gifted student. At home it is quite a different matter. The same characteristics take on a different look. While there are many characteristics of gifted youngsters, six have been selected to demonstrate the difference between those behaviors at home and at school.

CRAVING FOR KNOWLEDGE

Gifted kids want to know! They are curious and want to be in on everything that's going on. At school they want to know why the teacher does certain things, why some children seem to have different assignments, or why the teacher and other adults behave the way they do.

At home this same craving for knowledge takes on the personal tone of the family and questions are quite different. "How much money is in the checking account?" or "What were you and Dad arguing about last night?" Questions are not always asked in an appropriate or socially acceptable manner. Questions sometimes seem inappropriate for the age of the child. Questions can frequently be asked at difficult times or in front of other people.

Something says to the gifted youngster—"Find out!" They need to be involved in family issues and decisions as much as possible. They crave the answers, the solutions and the understanding of the family structure. Even though they seem too young to know or care about the light bill, the impending divorce of relatives, or the problems affecting the economy, they often are very aware and have only their parents to turn to for answers. It is very important that these questions be discussed and answered whenever possible.

HIGH STANDARDS FOR THEMSELVES

Gifted youngsters have high standards for themselves. This is not always evident in the way they keep their rooms and belongings, or how neat their work is when submitted to the teacher. Some students have such high standards for themselves, they choose not to turn in work for fear that it will be found less than acceptable. Coming to grips with their own standards is a difficult task for some of our youngsters. This takes time, experience, and lots of conversation between parents and children.

It is also difficult for them to accept the adult standards we force upon them. A room cleaned by an eight-year-old will seldom satisfy an adult. The standards of behavior we expect from our children take time to develop and become a part of their way of life. We need to be careful to be aware of the sensitive natures of our children and how they view our critique of their work, their cleaning attempts, or their responses to happenings around them.

QUESTION GENERALIZATIONS AND CHALLENGE AUTHORITY

Something in gifted youngsters tells them to question generalizations and

challenge authority. This happens in the home or at school and in other parts of the child's community. It's safer to do this questioning at home, so parents receive most of it. Teachers are not protected from this characteristic of the gifted learner. They are frequently challenged or questioned during the teaching day. Some of the questions are personal and have nothing to do with academics. Gifted kids want to know everything that is going on.

Our children need to be trained to challenge and question in a socially acceptable manner. They do not come with automatic courtesy and politeness in this area of their lives, and we must give them very specific direction and practice.

LONG ATTENTION SPAN AND ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE

Gifted youngsters have the ability to concentrate for long periods, and therefore they need longer blocks of time for working and thinking. Parents must make provision for this need.

Their hearing is interesting to consider. They sometimes seem unable to hear a parent or teacher when directions are being given. Indeed, sometimes they are far away in a thought pattern that helps them tune out the rest of the world. Sometimes they hear parents or teachers but give award-winning performances of "not hearing." Other times they truly can be totally absorbed and unable to hear. Interestingly, they also seem able to hear their names mentioned from the farthest end of the house when the discussion does not include them. We really must expect this, and work with them to concentrate, focus on the speaker, and listen to clues from the speaker. Maturity helps youngsters become better listeners.

NEED TO EXPRESS THOUGHTS, IDEAS, AND FEELINGS

Our brightest youngsters need the opportunity to express themselves. This does not mean only in the arts; we must provide homes and classrooms where students are free to express ideas and thoughts even when those ideas and thoughts are unusual or "off the wall."

Sometimes student expressions seem argumentative to parents or teachers. This is closely related to questioning authority. However, they need to have safe places to question what is and suggest why it might be. They need patient listeners even when the ideas seem unusual or destined for failure. The truly creative thinker may seem so unusual to those within the classroom or home that the thinker is dismissed as a "dreamer" or worse yet, "a weirdo." Reflect upon how our way of life has been impacted by such dreamers or creative thinkers.

It is critical for homes and classrooms to encourage such thinkers. It is fearsome to consider that we may lose some brilliant solutions to problems, or miss out on original thought because we are too busy or because we do not know how to value the creative thinker.

Creative youngsters need to learn how to present ideas, how to frame questions, how to get done what must be done to bring their thoughts and ideas to fruition. We must teach them how to present themselves, how to convince people, how to persuade, how to lead from an ethical base of knowledge.

SEEKING OTHERS LIKE THEMSELVES INTELLECTUALLY

Gifted children reach out to others like themselves intellectually. This can cause problems when students seek out older friends—or even adults in some cases—to enjoy similar hobbies, activities and conversations. This is where parents must step in, make decisions based on their knowledge of the youngster and the activities involved. It is not always appropriate for younger children to be involved with older children regardless of their intellectual abilities. Standards in the home must be clearly understood and parents must stand firm about rules and regulations of the family.

Young people must be treated with respect and courtesy. They must learn to offer the same in return. Parents must be careful not to give in to their youngsters merely because they are bright and verbal and able to make a good argument. They need strong parenting to go along with high ability and potential. ■

JUDITH ROSEBERRY is CAG treasurer and past president, and the principal at Stanley Elementary School in Garden Grove. She is also on the Advisory Committee of *Parenting for High Potential*.

Coming your way this fall...

CAG INSTITUTES

teachers ■ parents ■ administrators

See page 46 for dates and details

Parents in the GATE Classroom

BY GLENDA R. THOMAS

Parents volunteering in the classroom can be a positive experience if there is careful set up and management. Just as the teacher establishes an effective classroom management program early in the year, so too must she establish procedures for parents to volunteer in the classroom. Like any good program, using parent volunteers effectively requires planning, scheduling, and flexibility on the part of the classroom teacher. The benefits, academically and socially, can be rewarding for students, teachers, and the parents themselves.

I have used parent volunteers in my GATE classes to broaden all areas of the academic curriculum. Volunteer parents have helped my class deal with emotional stresses when a class experienced tragedy. I have used parents to assist with physical fitness activities and some of those ever present fund raising events. Within any group of GATE parents there are hidden resources that can add richness to your classroom. Finding and developing their opportunities to serve is the key to success.

Back-to-school night is an excellent time to talk to parents about your expectations and how they can assist.

Many beginning teachers have concerns and do not know how to utilize parents in the classroom. The teacher must be comfortable working with parents for the collaboration to be effective. Teachers need to be ready to help parents understand the importance of being fair to all students, and to avoid showing favoritism towards their own child.

Volunteers must be good role models and use judgment when handling occasional student outbursts. All members of the classroom community must show respect and appreciation for the contributions of others. No adult should ever discuss (gossip about) an individual student's behavior or achievement with anyone who is not part of the professional team. I have found that if the expectations are established and communicated with the parents early and clearly, problems do not occur. If some situation does surface, I immediately address the concern in a private talk with the volunteer.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

Back-to-school night is an excellent time to talk to parents about your expectations and how they can assist. Plan the agenda so that your parent volunteer program is a priority item. Have sign-up sheets or blank information cards available for parents to fill out. Ask parents to list their own occupations, hobbies, and interests, and those of their spouses. Don't let the shy ones get away. Ask them to think of ways they can help in the education of their children. Almost anyone can help on field trips, work on class projects, do some clerical work, or assist with correcting assignments. With a little prodding, they will come up with more ideas on how they can help. My experience has been that working parents will plan ahead and take a day off from work to help in the classroom or for field trips once or twice a year when they feel their contributions are important. I make a few phone calls to parents who didn't attend the initial meeting and ask questions to complete an information card. I also make calls to those parents who listed some special skills that can enrich our curriculum.

MATCHING PARENT STRENGTHS WITH CLASSROOM NEEDS

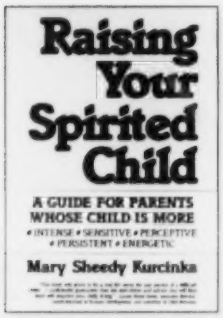
Each year the parent volunteers have different strengths. Some years my students participate in advanced drawing, painting, music, and dance activities because I have parent volunteers with special talent in the fine arts. In other years parents share their cultural backgrounds, ethnic traditions, and native languages. I plan the year's special projects and activities according to the parents' skills, hobbies, careers, and interests. The following are examples of how parent volunteers have enriched my 5th grade GATE curriculum.

One of my first parent volunteers was Karen H. Her information card was filled with interests and expertise in areas in which I had no special talent. In fact, her background and interests were almost too good to be true. I knew something about this mother, as she had been a valued volunteer in her son's classes each year since the second grade. I had reason to believe she could really do the things she claimed.

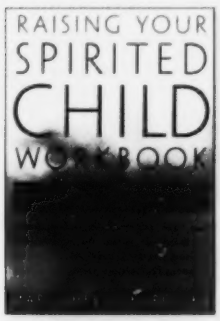
Mrs. H. conducted her on-going gymnastics training (tumbling) once each week. She had started this activity when her son was in the second grade. By now, he and his classmates were pretty good and their performances were featured in school assemblies.

See PARENT VOLUNTEERS, 38

RAISING YOUR SPIRITED CHILD: A Guide for Parents Whose Child is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, Energetic
by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka


Raising Your Spirited Child
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS WHOSE CHILD IS MORE
• INTENSE • SENSITIVE • PERCEPTIVE • PERSISTENT • ENERGETIC
Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

RAISING YOUR SPIRITED CHILD WORKBOOK
by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka



(1992 and 1998 respectively)
HarperCollins, paperback $13.00
Reprint edition 302 pp.
and $14.00, 306 pp.
ISBN 0-06-016361-5 and
ISBN 0-06-095240-7

REVIEWED BY JUDITH SMITH

The term "spirited child" was coined by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka to describe the child most authors label as "difficult," "strong willed," or "stubborn." The book came from her experiences in teaching classes for the parents of spirited children. As the parent of one of these children herself, she needed support and wanted better ways to interact with her child. She turned to the latest research in child development, communication, personality, temperament and type.

Kurcinka defines "spirited child" as one whose temperament or "preferred style of responding" is more pronounced than that of other children in several temperament traits. Spirited kids are those who have a high degree of intensity, persistence, sensitivity, and perceptiveness, and low adaptability. In addition, some spirited children show some combination of behavior patterns that are less predictable, more hesitant in new situations, more serious in temperament, and with more energy than is typical. Most children have these characteristics to some degree, and all of the characteristics have both positive and negative associations. It is the degree to which each is present that determines whether or not a child is spirited.

Kurcinka provides a description of each trait and invites readers to rank their children at the degree to which they demonstrate the trait on a weighted scale. Totaling the score for each of the individual traits gives an indication of whether the child is best described as "cool," "spunky," or "spirited." A similar ranking for adults can highlight potential areas of conflict within a family.

Raising Your Spirited Child is organized into sections that give detailed descriptions, real life examples and concrete suggestions for recognizing spirit, as well as working with, living with, and socializing with spirit. Kurcinka encourages parents to acknowledge and reinforce the positive aspects of each trait. Observing the child's temperament allows parents to choose the strategies most likely to work and to modify schedules and environments to create successful interactions. This approach should not be confused with permitting children to do whatever they want. It is teaching children to monitor their own feelings, express them appropriately, and develop the social skills needed to be responsible members of a family or social group.

The concluding section is an encouraging essay reinforcing the value of working with, rather than against or in spite of, the child's temperament; the reward is a strong lifetime relationship. Of my three gifted children the youngest also fits the definition of spirited. Unfortunately this book wasn't available when she was an infant and toddler, when I could have used it most. Although I recognized the importance of acknowledging my children's emotions and helping them recognize their own feelings and act appropriately, it was different from the way I learned to deal with my emotions, and it required effort to learn a new way of interacting with them.

Raising Your Spirited Child doesn't directly focus on giftedness, but adults familiar with the characteristics of giftedness will recognize similarities to the traits of "spirit." Knowing the characteristics of giftedness doesn't necessarily provide the tools for working through the associated problems, but approaching the behaviors of gifted children, or all children, as expressions of personality traits presents new options. Although the concrete examples and suggestions are mainly from early childhood, any adult who lives or works with children can apply the principal of recognizing and honoring temperament to any age. Similarly, the suggestions for communication patterns and teaching strategies for each trait can be applied whether the child has a mild or strong degree of one or all of the personality traits that combine to form spirit. The book is organized so readers can refer to just the trait they are working with or to specific situations that are common sources of conflict. Each chapter is packed

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

with information, suggestions, and examples but the style is lively, conversational, and easy to read.

Raising Your Spirited Child Workbook is a recently published companion to the original book. It is designed to simulate the experience of actually attending one of the spirited child workshops led by Kurcinka through the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning. Like the original, it gives numerous examples and specific suggestions, but Kurcinka has also created a composite group for the reader to participate in. The exercises that would stimulate discussion in the group are presented with room to write responses. The reader is then encouraged to imagine being part of the group and compare the responses with those of other families. The success of this approach will depend on the reader's motivation to work on the exercises, attempt to practice the new ways of thinking about the traits of spirit, and try new approaches to common situations. Either *Raising Your Spirited Child* or the *Raising Your Spirited Child Workbook* can stand alone as a guide for working with spirited children. They complement and extend each other, however, and would be most powerful when used together by parents or in an actual parent group.

Helping children learn the communication and problem solving skills that allow them to express their feelings, needs, and personality in ways that are healthy for themselves and respectful of others requires time and effort from all the adults in their lives, especially parents. Kurcinka doesn't suggest any shortcuts, but there are few things in life more important or more rewarding than building strong relationships with our children. ■

JUDITH SMITH is CAG Parent Representative for the Pacific Region and Co-President of the Tri-County GATE Council. She can be reached at: bobjudysmith@earthlink.net.

PARENTS GUIDE TO TEACHERS OF GIFTED—TEACHERS GUIDE TO PARENTS

By Sandra Warren, Illustrated by Corbin Hillam
(1990)
Trillium Press, paperback, $9.99
ISBN 0898245079

REVIEWED BY VIRGINIA MCQUEEN

This short guide for parents of gifted students and for teachers who work with parents of the gifted offers sound advice for working together. It is liberally sprinkled with humor and cartoon drawings that hit home. The guide is cleverly printed back-to-back so that when you are finished with the parent guide, the teacher guide may be read by flipping the book upside down and turning it over. The opening chapter includes an introspection of one's own attitudes and reactions to school, and is followed by one that demonstrates the need to be an informed parent. Myths and realities of giftedness are spelled out with tips for coping with the real world. Directions for working within the school system are next in line with a section on recognizing and building a positive working relationship with the teacher. An annotated bibliography for collecting facts through printed, electronic, and video media is included for quick reference. The 47-page parent guide ends with a "School Experience Inventory for Parents;" when completed and shared with teachers and staff, the Inventory will give concise information and save time in establishing communication with the school.

The introduction for teachers also asks them to be introspective about their attitudes and teaching strategies regarding gifted students. It encourages teachers to look at the hopes and expectations of parents for their gifted children from conception through school age. To assist in building empathy, the teacher is asked to consider the parents' point of view as they cope with the questions and often unthinking comments at family get-togethers and social gatherings about the positive and negative behaviors of their gifted children. There are suggestions for communication links between home and school to promote a team approach to the education of the child. The teachers' guide ends with a lengthy section on how to start and continue community organizations which promote education for the gifted.

The illustrations in this useful book are done by Corbin Hillam in such a way that you cannot help but laughingly relate them to personal experiences. The purpose of the guide is stated in the forward by author Sandra Warren : "Developing and nurturing the potential of our gifted children is a shared responsibility. Together we are rearing our future." The descriptor "small but meaty" aptly applies to this guide packed full of tips and suggestions to benefit everyone associated with the education of gifted children. ■

VIRGINIA MCQUEEN is Associate Editor for Curriculum and Technology and a retired GATE educator, parent, and advocate.

GIFTED PARENT GROUPS: The SENG Model
by James T. Webb & Arlene DeVries
(1998)
Gifted Psychology Press, paperback $26.00, 146 pp.
ISBN 0-910-707-29-4
www.GiftedPsychologyPress.com

REVIEWED BY MARLA DOHERTY

Once in awhile a book comes along that is balm to some tender spot in life. This is one of those books. It makes the world a better place.

While parenting gifted children is an intensely joyful life experience, it is also a uniquely challenging one. Parents of gifted children need information, resources, reassurance, and a safe forum for discussing possible problems and preventive strategies. *Gifted Parent Groups: The SENG Model* is a manual to assist parents, guidance counselors, coordinators of gifted programs, school psychologists, and interested others in training to guide parent discussion groups for parents of gifted/talented/highly able kids. It should be noted that this book is an updated version of the authors' earlier publication, *Training Manual for Facilitators of the SENG Model Guided Discussion Groups.*

Parents of gifted children often note that it is difficult to find people or resources to assist them in supporting their children's social and emotional development. In 1980, parents of Dallas Egbert learned just how scarce appropriate services were when their extremely bright 16-year-old son attempted, and later succeeded at committing suicide. It was from this tragedy that SENG was born, as part of the psychology department under founder and first Director, Dr. James Webb. The best solution to problems is prevention, and the SENG parent groups help parents stay one step ahead of the special challenges of raising gifted kids—challenges that may be internal to the child, external, or due to mismatches between the child and his or her environment.

Launched in 1981 by the SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted) program, these discussion groups are usually led by two trained facilitators. New facilitators are trained by experienced ones or by the authors themselves, James Webb and Arlene DeVries, two people who have done a lot to make the world a more user-friendly place for gifted kids and their parents. The manual is read as part of this training. It can also be read as an introduction to the SENG parent groups, for increasing one's interpersonal skills, or to consider training as a discussion group facilitator.

This book would be an asset on any school site's GATE parent/teacher resource shelf. The back of the book alone has enough information to warrant the purchase. Webb and DeVries include appendices that list books, publishers, periodicals, organizations, and Internet resources pertinent to parents and educators of gifted students.

Consider giving this book to your child's principal, guidance counselor, school psychologist, GATE parent advisory council, or GATE coordinator. If it can prevent or sooth some problem for even one family, it will have served its purpose.

MARLA DOHERTY is the CAG Parent Representative for the Mount Shasta Region, and GATE Coordinator for Sequoia School, Shasta Elementary School, and Igo-Ono-Platina District, all in Shasta County. Ms. Doherty guides SENG discussion groups in her region and may be contacted at 530-225-0020, 530-225-0080 x 119, or 530-241-1045.

Turn the Century at the Century Plaza!

38th Annual CAG Conference, March 3–5, 2000

"Century of Reflections—Honoring the Past, Imagining the Future"

We're turning the century at the Century Plaza—one of the world's most celebrated and luxurious hotels. Noted authorities on gifted eduction will be the major speakers. Point/Counterpoint discussions will be held on key issues and California gifted educators will be featured in our California Showcase presentations.

Labeling: To Tell or Not To Tell

BY PAUL PLOWMAN

Many parents are filled with great uneasiness upon learning that their children have been identified as gifted. They wonder, and ask themselves:

- What is meant by the term?
- Should we rush down to the nearest community college and enroll in a gifted parenting course?
- Do we treat our children differently now? May we still expect them to do the dishes and cut the grass? Or should we, as supportive parents, take over chores so giftedness can flourish?
- Should we encourage only those friendships which might contribute to advanced intellectual and creative ability?
- Should we tell our children they are gifted, or will that just create problems?

Hold on parents! Your children are still the same children they were prior to being identified as gifted. They still need a parent's love and nurturing. This new label of "gifted" or "talented" should not become a stumbling block for you in your relationships with your children.

Gifted children already know—whether told directly or not—that they are different from most of their age peers. It is natural for them to feel out of sync with children who prefer picture books and comics while they enjoy adventure and enlightenment from the printed page. It is not necessary for you to focus on the label, but it is important that you help your children understand and cope with individuality—to appreciate the uniqueness of each person. They need to understand that being "gifted" is not better—just different.

PURPOSES FOR USING LABELS

So let us explore the purposes labels serve. The immediate purpose is to provide information. They give us ideas of what to expect whether it be garlic olives, patriotic poems, advanced math, or all A's on a report card. They are doors to understanding.

They also trigger emotion. Note two frequently observed bumper stickers:

"Proud parent of an honor student."

"My kid can beat up your honor student."

The "honor student" is the focus of both sayings; but one is very positive and the other negative. Let me share some experiences in which labels had negative and positive responses.

In the early 1960s I was employed by the California Department of Education, as the first consultant for the new Mentally Gifted Minors' Program. One day I noticed a very attractive brochure circulating among the professional staff, which highlighted high achievement in a California high school. It featured beaming faces of scholarship recipients who were described as outstanding in academic, leadership, athletic, and musical achievement. One of the state consultants had initialed the brochure and written words to the effect of:

Isn't it nice to be bright? Parents love you. Your teachers idolize you. And someday you'll lead us all down the path to socialism.

Clearly the identification of and focus on talented and gifted children had triggered negative emotions within this "professional" consultant.

During the first month of my employment, a high official in the Division of Instruction called me into his office and demanded to know why I had included my earned Stanford degree, Ed.D., after my name on a letter I had written. Here I was leading a new, state-wide charge to promote excellence through the Mentally Gifted Minors' Program, and was being chastised for displaying a label that signified excellence or high intellectual achievement—a major purpose of the MGM program.

On still another occasion, I was the Department of Education's representative on a Western Association of Schools and Colleges evaluation team reviewing a large high school in Los Angeles. In the opening session at the school, the chairman introduced team members to the high school faculty and to district personnel. He expressed pleasure in presenting each individual, naming their areas of expertise and their doctorate degrees. Unfortunately, the Department had not sent my credentials, and at the very end of the introductions, the chairman looked over at me and in what seemed a very condescending manner said, "Mr. Plowman, tell us something about yourself." I replied, "My doctorate is from Stanford in General School Administration." Suddenly I was a full fledged, not a peripheral, member of the team. Labels do indeed provide information and they provoke emotion.

As we all know, labels are both inclusive and exclusive in nature. And in some cases, they mean different things to different people. A can of peaches is exclusively a can of peaches. The labels, "Soroptimists," "Rotarians," and "Elks" identify groups of varying but like-minded individuals with shared interests and missions. The term, "skydiver," defi-

See LABELING, 40

What Parents Need To Know About Curriculum Differentiation

BY KATHLEEN PATTERSON

As the Capitol Region Parent Representative, parents often say to me, "My child has been identified as gifted. Now what?" The answer is a complex one that I will try to simplify and summarize.

Gifted and talented students are those whose learning characteristics and thinking abilities differ significantly from those of their chronological (same age) peers. They tend to learn basic information quickly and easily. They are often resistant to "relearning" what they already know and may develop behavioral problems or become underachievers if not appropriately challenged. In order to meet their potential they may need modification of the core curriculum (that basic information that students are responsible for knowing). That modification is called "differentiation."

Although some differentiation occurs naturally with good teaching, the majority of teachers need specific training in recognizing the characteristics of gifted students, understanding what differentiation is and how to make it happen in the classroom in a consistent and purposeful manner. When differentiation is used consistently and frequently over time, it raises achievement levels for all students in the class.

There are several pieces to the differentiation puzzle; they include:

- Complexity
- Acceleration
- Novelty
- Depth

COMPLEXITY can be seen as making connections or seeing relationships. One way to do this is to look at a subject or type of event over time. During a unit on the civil war in America, a teacher may introduce the fact that there have been many civil wars in many countries, and some are still occurring in the world today. How are the causes of these events similar? How are they different? Complexity can also be done by looking at an issue from different perspectives. How would your view of offshore drilling differ if you were the owner of the oil well, an oceanographer or a marine biologist?

"Differentiation can provide a richer, more meaningful learning experience"

ACCELERATION is the easiest form of differentiation to use. It is useful in the area of math but is also used in other subject areas. Ideally students should be pretested before a unit is taught. If students demonstrate mastery of content in that area they are not required to sit through instruction about material they already know but are given more advanced content. This is called *curriculum compacting*. If the pretest shows areas of weakness, those areas could be addressed before students move on.

NOVELTY is introducing an area of study that is new to the student. It is most effective if the student chooses or has input into the subject based on his or her own interests. This might take the form of a contract with the teacher for an independent study project and could be what the student works on when he has compacted out of some content area.

DEPTH involves digging deeper into a subject. Too often the curriculum in California deals with many issues, but in a superficial manner. Gifted students sometimes have intense interest in a subject and wish to know more. Depth can involve looking at patterns (there are patterns in math, in literature, in a civil war), looking at rules (again there are mathematical rules, rules governing the English language, rules in government), or looking at the ethics of an issue.

Differentiation can provide a richer, more meaningful learning experience, not just for gifted children but for all children. These lessons, discussions, approaches may be done with a whole class, with flexible groups within a class (children may change groups periodically in order to be taught at the appropriate level) or in the form of tiered lessons which have specific learning objectives for individual students according to their needs. While differentiation is good teaching for all students, it is critical for gifted students if we are to keep them engaged in the educational system and enable them to reach their full potential.

It is also critical that parents of gifted children learn how to recognize differentiation in the classroom and encourage and support teachers in its use. Parents can do this by attending classes or conferences, reading books, or joining a GATE advocacy group. Start by talking to the program coordinator in your district. Find out what type of program your district offers and what learning opportunities may be available for parents. Get involved. Parent involvement can be one of the most important factors in insuring a successful learning experience for children. ■

KATHLEEN PATTERSON is the CAG Parent Representative from the Capitol Region. She can be reached at: kathpatter@aol.com.

Bridging the Generation Gap

An Interview With Judy Galbraith

BY DEBRA JOHNSON

Oh, just forget it!" Is that what you sometimes think after a conversation with your parents? Have you ever spent hours searching for the right words to make a special request of your parents? Do you wonder why sometimes they just don't seem to "get it"? If communicating with your parents makes you frustrated and confused, don't worry. This is a problem that has been around for a long time. In fact, solving this communication problem is commonly known as "bridging the generation gap."

We were fortunate to interview Judy Galbraith recently, and get some expert advice. Judy Galbraith is the author of *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide*; she has a master's degree in guidance and counseling of the gifted and has worked with and taught gifted youth, their parents, and their teachers. In 1983, she started Free Spirit Publishing, which specializes in self-help books for children and teens.

To address the topic of bridging the communication gap between gifted kids and their parents, GATE students from Almeria Middle School in Fontana, California prepared questions to ask Ms. Galbraith for her professional advice.

STUDENT: When my dad was young, he wanted to become a doctor, but he never did. Now, he wants me to become a doctor. I really do not want to be a doctor. How can I pursue my own dreams without disappointing my dad?

GALBRAITH: There may be no way to not disappoint your dad. Nonetheless, it may help to try to show him that what you want to do is worthwhile and productive. In time, parents usually come around. Remember to be sincere in your communication with your dad. Express a genuine respect for his opinions and concerns. It may also help to look at the situation from your dad's point of view. Ultimately, he hopes to spare you from making mistakes in terms of career choice.

I once counseled some parents concerned about their daughter's desire to become an artist. The idea of their daughter becoming a "starving artist" just didn't appeal to them. The parents were encouraging their daughter to pursue a career in the area of computer technology. In our conversation about this situation, I pointed out to the parents that as an owner of a publishing company, I knew many artists who were very successful in their profession (none of them were so-called starving!) The key to their success was the amount of dedication and passion they had for their work. There are many myths and misconceptions that should be avoided when considering certain career paths. If a person is passionate about his or her work, then the possibility for success is great.

STUDENT: At my house, it seems my grades and school work are the only things my parents talk about with me. I wouldn't mind if it was just every once-in-a-while, but it is all the time. I have many interests, hobbies, and friends that would make great topics of conversation. When I bring up these other topics, my parents don't listen. They simply change the topic back to the importance of academics in my life. How can I change the topic of conversation and take the focus off of me and my school work?

GALBRAITH: It is important to remember to try and look at things from your parents' point of view. Rightly or wrongly, grades and performance are one way parents have to develop a perception of their success as parents. If your grades and performance are exceptional, then they may think they must be doing something right! Also, parents are very aware, through news reports and other information sources, that a drop in grades and performances can be a danger signal alerting them to specific problems that suggest they should be concerned.

It is really important to communicate honestly with your parents. Maybe they are not aware of your frustrations. You need to be forthright and discuss your concerns. It might be possible for you and your parents to set aside a certain time

See GENERATION GAP, 27

Student CHALLENGE Center

Send your submissions with an entry form to:

Debra Johnson
Associate Editor for Youth
3425 Santa Cruz Drive
Riverside, CA 92507
E-mail: DebJoAnn@aol.com

Entries for challenges from this issue (summer 1999) must be received no later than October 20, 1999 to be considered for publication.

STUDENT CHALLENGE ENTRY FORM

Name

Age Grade

Address

City State Zip

Teacher's name

Name of School

School District

I certify that the submission is original and created by the student.

Student signature

Parent signature

TIPS FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Each issue of the *Communicator* contains at least one Challenge for students. The results are published two issues later. Entries are evaluated for creativity, demonstration of thinking skills, use of the Challenge criteria, and the written portion of the solution. The scoring grid used for judging is shown below. This information will allow you to review your Challenge solution using the same criteria as the Challenge judges.

Each Challenge has four criteria or requirements. These are creative solution, high level thinking and/or problem solving, use of specific criteria published for the Challenge, and the written description. Your entry should show how you solved the Challenge. You should explain the thinking and problem solving that went into the solution and the uniqueness or originality of the results. Age is taken into consideration also.

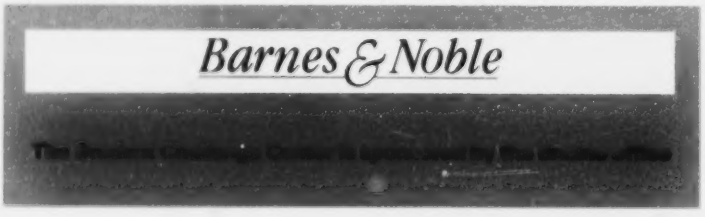
To be published a Challenge solution must receive:

1. No marks below the "Meets criteria" column
2. At least 2 marks in the "Greatly exceeds criteria" column

   OR
3. At least 3 marks in the "Exceeds criteria" column

	does not meet criteria	somewhat meets criteria	meets criteria	exceeds criteria	greatly exceeds criteria
Creative solution					
Evidence of high level of thinking/problem solving					
Exemplary written description					
Uses criteria as noted in the Challenge					

It has been very exciting to receive so many answers to the Challenge Column. The students who entered have really given the editors a challenge to review and score the entries. We look forward to reviewing the good works that you will continue to enter. Good luck!



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20th Century Challenge—The Mission is Possible!

As we move into the 21st century, it's a challenge to the human spirit to try and imagine all of the possibilities that await the human race. After all, we have accomplished many great and wonderful feats during the 20th century. We walked on the moon, the microwave was invented, modes of transportation expanded, medicine progressed to great heights, and the use of personal computers drastically enhanced and changed the ways in which we communicate with each other.

Because so many inventions and discoveries originated in the 20th century it seems like an almost impossible task to identify only one as the most important. But, that's exactly what we are challenging you to do.

Your mission or challenge, should you choose to accept it is:

1. Select the discovery or invention you believe has made the greatest contribution to our world during the 20th century.
2. Identify the person(s) responsible.
3. Illustrate in a creative manner your reason(s) for making this choice.

Mail your entry with a Student Challenge form.

Dr. B's Side Bar Science

Be careful...Dr. B's challenge for this issue is a tricky one.

"How does a Frisbee fly?"

Creative entries obviously are winners, but don't forget—you also must give a scientific explanation. Mail in your entry with a Student Challenge form.

Where would you be if...

- **the continent has an average altitude of 7500 feet**
- **it is twice the size of the United States**
- **about 80% of incoming radiation from the sun is reflected back and 20% absorbed**
- **it covers 2.04 million square miles**
- **its size doubles in winter**
- **between 1000 to 4000 people live here**
- **interesting temperatures have been recorded here over time**

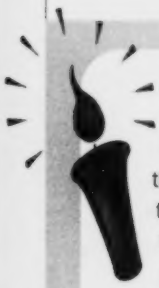
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Challenge Winners

In the Winter 1999 issue of Dr. B's Side Bar Science, we had this challenge:

"Why is it that when you blow on a candle, the flame goes out; but when you blow on embers they burst up in flames?"

The best answer we received was from Faryar Borhani who said:



To know why candle flames go out when you blow, you first need to know how a candle is lit. When you put a match up to the wick of the candle, a bit of the wax melts, and acts as fuel to ignite the candle. When the match is held up to the wick and ignites the candle, that is called the flash point. The reason that when you blow a candle and the flame goes out is because a candle has a poor flash point.

The reason for an ember, like wood, bursting up in flames when you blow is because when you light the fire it needs oxygen. The only place the fire can get the oxygen is from the air. The human body has lots of oxygen in it and when you blow it uses some of it. So when you blow at the fire you're blowing oxygen which enlarges the fire.

Definitions.
1. Flash point (n). The lowest temperature at which the vapor of a combustible liquid can be made to ignite.
2. Oxygen (n). A nonmetallic element constituting 21 percent of the atmosphere by volume that occurs as a diatomic gas.

Faryar is a 5th grade student at the Pegasus School in Irvine, CA. His teacher is Wendy Cox. Faryar will receive a $25 gift certificate to be used at any Barnes and Noble bookstore. Congratulations Faryar!

We have a winner from the Winter 1999 challenge section: Yesenia Becerril is an eighth grade GATE student at Almeria Middle School in Fontana, CA. Her teachers are Karen Gallimore and Doug Bergquist. Yesenia will receive a $25 gift certificate she can use at any Barnes and Noble bookstore. Congratulations Yesenia!

To Read or Not to Read—That is the Challenge

By Yesenia Becerril

Now days, who has time to read? Although many people make some kind of attempt to read, it just isn't enough to motivate them to continue the habit. People now have easy access to books on audio tape or on video tape to either listen as the book is read to them, or to help interpret the book for them visually.

A book on audio tape is pretty okay, but it will deprive the person of actually reading the book. Throughout the years in various public elementary schools, I have observed that teachers first read to you and then you read to them. I know that the teachers don't have you read because you are a magnificent reader or have a lovely voice. They have you read because reading increases a person's vocabulary and it's like when you run in P.E. to stay healthy and fit. Well, reading is like running—only for the brain—because it helps keep it in good shape. If an audio cassette is reading to you, the mind isn't running or staying in shape and your spelling and vocabulary aren't getting any better over time. I guess since many people think that they can do without exercise sometimes (like me, for example), and if they don't exercise once or twice, it won't hurt them, but if they get into the habit, then they won't be so fit and healthy. I think it works the same for the mind; hearing an audio tape once or twice won't do any damage, but if you put off reading for yourself for a long time then the brain won't be getting enough exercise and it will become lazy and slow.

Continued on 27

TO READ OR NOT TO READ

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As for books on video tape, most videos based on books are pretty good. The only problem I see with books on video is that they sometimes change the story a bit to comply with the script. I remember when I was in third grade, the teacher read a book called *The Phantom Tollbooth* and it was a really good book. Well, she showed us the movie and I saw that some parts in the book were changed or that some of the things the characters said were either wrong or completely cut off. I also remember that the really far off and crazy parts that could only be imagined by the reader were completely cut out of the movie. Although the movie may be good, it might deprive you of wonderful things such as the parts that were really good in the book but were cut off in the movie. Well, something else will also be cut off— the great feeling you get when you have completed the book.

In its entirety, reading will never be replaced by any new creation. One of the greatest gifts a child or an adult can receive is the gift of reading. Not only is reading fun, but it is essential to everyone's daily lives. Although reading does take time, I can assure you that the time will be well-spent. If you choose to get a book on audio tape or video, it can turn out to be very good and you might enjoy it. But don't let it become a habit whenever you want to read a book. Reading can be fun and it will teach you self-determination by not giving up until you come to the end of the book. Reading will increase your vocabulary and your ability to read. Everyone should read and experience everything associated with reading to learn that the oldest and simplest way will give you the most benefit.

GENERATION GAP

Continued from 23

every week in which you discuss your grades and academic performance. Then set boundaries. At other times throughout the week, your conversations could focus on your life outside of school work.

STUDENT: My mother is making me take piano lessons. I don't like playing the piano, I prefer playing the guitar. What do I do?

GALBRAITH: Is there a reason why you could not do both? Many talented musicians play both the piano and guitar. If this isn't possible for financial reasons, your might earn the money to buy a guitar and pay for lessons yourself. Or, maybe you have a friend who could teach you to play the guitar.

If you continue your piano lessons, you may come to appreciate it down the road. Sometimes, it is hard to see the future value in the things we do as a young person. When I was a child, I wanted to take piano lessons but my parents could not afford the lessons or the piano. Instead, I learned to play the viola, which was what my father wanted me to play. Through my viola lessons, I learned an appreciation for orchestral music that has remained with me throughout my life. I also learned how to read music which is a great skill no matter what instrument you play.

One thing you may consider is discussing the possibility of a time frame with respect to piano versus guitar lessons (if you can only choose one.) For example, if you agree to lessons for a certain length of time and still prefer the guitar, then your parents may let you switch.

STUDENT: My parents are very strict. Every day of my life is scheduled with school work, homework, church responsibilities, and home responsibilities. I never get to do kid stuff. How can I get my parents to relax and let me be a kid before my childhood is over?

GALBRAITH: Some parents thrive on having every day scheduled and organized. Unfortunately, you may not appreciate this lifestyle. For some people, many responsibilities and too busy a schedule can lead to serious stress and anxiety. You need to talk with your parents and express your concerns. Hopefully, you can work out a healthy balance that will allow you to have time for kid stuff and your daily responsibilities, too.

EDITOR DEBRA JOHNSON: What is your best advice to parents of gifted kids?

GALBRAITH: Make sure that your kids know that you love them just the way they are. Unconditionally. Kids need to hear this message often to ensure they get the message. We need to help our kids be themselves. Attempting to mold our kids is a natural, well-meaning parental tendency. But in this "molding" effort, we need to ask ourselves if we are doing what we are doing for ourselves or for our kids. If a young person is losing his or her enjoyment in life, it is a sign that we may be pushing or pressuring rather than supporting them. It is also important for parents to value the issues kids consider important. Find opportunities to negotiate and compromise, and to ask questions and listen. Remember that kids go on to happy productive lives when they pursue their passions.

School to Work

A Strategy for Engaging and Encouraging Gifted and Talented Students

BY LOUISE STEVENS

How would you respond to a program that enabled gifted students to learn beyond the limits of the school curriculum, to learn from professional specialists, to learn through addressing real problems and issues and to learn through projects combining the students' natural interests with career-related applications? School to Work programs can provide such opportunities for gifted and talented youngsters.

The School to Work Opportunities Act passed by Congress in 1994 provides funding and program development information to support education initiatives that engage students in exploring careers and applying and expanding school learned skills in real world settings. The Act evolved based on research indicating that most students were leaving high school with vague goals related to going to college or getting a job. Ten years following graduation 30% were still wandering from one minimum wage job to the next. Of those who entered college, 50% dropped out before graduating. Of those who pursued college through graduation many spent the first years exploring options and thus ended up funding additional years of school to fulfill requirements of their newly discovered majors. The intent of the STWOA is to provide students with opportunities to identify career related strengths and interests, to explore career options through research, job shadows and internships and to learn academic and technical skills through projects and problem solving as opposed to rote memorization.

Locally initiated activities that have been funded under the Act include:

- career guidance
- job shadows
- problem-based learning
- internships
- project-based learning
- field Research
- classroom consultants
- association-sponsored group internships
- e-mail mentoring

School to Career activities such as those described above, provide gifted and talented students opportunities to:

- pursue self-directed learning
- apply critical and creative thinking
- learn and apply research skills
- develop and use communications skills in a professional setting
- learn beyond the limits of the school's course curriculum
- demonstrate their competence and receive recognition
- connect with mentors who might advise and assist them with their career and academic goals

SO, WHAT'S NEW?

The savvy and energetic teacher reading these examples might respond, "So what's new? For decades I have been pursuing projects like these with my gifted and talented students."

What is new is that through the School to Work Opportunities Act, each state has received funds to initiate such project-based and community-based learning and most recently, the National School to Work Office has been collaborating with the National Association for Gifted Children, the Council for Exceptional Children, the Association for the Gifted and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted on a national effort to identify and publicize School to Work programs that best served gifted and talented students.

A technical review process was used to ensure that all submissions were thoroughly and impartially evaluated. An outside review panel was assembled comprised of experts in gifted education and STW. Submissions were evaluated according to criteria consistent with guidelines made available to all applicants.

FIVE BEST PRACTICES AND SIX UNIQUE APPROACHES SELECTED BY PANEL

The designation Best Gifted Education/STW Practice signifies excellent progress in implementing a comprehensive STW system serving high achieving/gifted and talented students. The designation Unique Gifted Education/STW Approach recognizes a unique program element. Unique Approaches did not present all key components of a comprehensive STW system (school-based, work-based, and connecting activities), or provide sufficient information about how gifted and talented students are served.

Selected Best Practice Programs share the following characteristics:

- specifically serve gifted and talented students
- demonstrate a school-based learning component that supports and builds on a work-based learning component, and provide students with high level academic and technical skills and opportunities for career exploration and guidance
- demonstrate a work-based learning component connected to academic classroom learning, and prepare students for the diverse skills needed in today's high-performance workplaces
- present connecting activities that build and maintain linkages between students, educators, the workplace, parents, and others in the community
- provide evidence about effectiveness, including indicators

that it could be replicated in diverse settings throughout the country
- address identified priorities such as strategies to improve math and science achievement, serve gifted students in rural and urban areas, enhance middle school achievement, and promote linkages with institutions of higher learning.

RESPONSE FROM GIFTED STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Gifted and talented students and their parents have been quick to appreciate the opportunities and advantages from participation in School to Career activities. Particularly at the high school level, specific courses for gifted and talented students are rare. There are A.P. and I.B. classes which are indeed designed to challenge academically talented students, but these classes by necessity follow a format focused on preparing students for qualifying exams. School to Work programs challenge gifted and talented students to pursue their interests, to apply their knowledge, to stretch their thinking and to begin exploring possible futures.

RESEARCH SCHOOL TO CAREER OPTIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

To find options for your school or district to participate in, begin with the School-to-Work website: http//www.stw.ed.gov/. Through the website you can access your state School-to-Work plan. State School-to-Work grants funded under the Act are for five years. The fifteen states that received their funds in 1994 are in the process of structuring sustainability plans to maintain activities beyond the funding period. Other states that received funds as recently as 1998 are just now identifying programs with promise. For educators in California, the state School-to-Work contact is Jim Rowland, who can be reached at 916-654-9690 or e-mail at stcmail@edd.ca.gov.

See SCHOOL TO WORK, 42

Sample Projects

Two of the five Best Practice selections and one of the six Unique Approach projects are briefly described here as examples of strategies for linking gifted and talented with community resources, learning opportunities and career possibilities.

LINCOLN PARK ACADEMY-HARBOR BRANCH OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTION, INC. A SCHOOL WITHIN A WORKPLACE (FLORIDA): This advanced and innovative science education and technology model connects science teachers and gifted students, elementary through high school, with working scientists. The program was developed by the St. Lucie County School-to-Career Partnership involving Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution (HBOI) and Lincoln Park Academy (LPA), an academic magnet school (grades 6-12) and site of the county's International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

The program features a pioneering pre-college marine science academy for juniors and seniors. Teachers and students spend 4-5 hours on alternating days at HBOI in a fast paced,rigorous research environment applying technologies that are integrated with the IB curriculum.

Students conduct experiments, collect data for scientists, participate in summer internships, and complete a 4,000-word essay and portfolio of laboratory experiences for the IB diploma. Intensive science fair summer camps are held for entering 9th graders, and field and laboratory activities engage middle school students. Seniors design marine science activities for students from nearby Lakewood Park Elementary School.

Students interested in the highly competitive IB program apply during 8th grade. Twenty-five percent of the 125 IB students in the first two years of the program are non-Caucasian, and a majority have been girls. This initiative has received awards from the National Science Foundation, Florida STW, and the Florida Department of Education.

Contact Information

Program information: Dr. Susan B. Cook, Education Director, HBOI, 5600 U.S. 1 North, Fort Pierce, FL 34946, 561.465.2400, x.502, scook@hboi.edu. Ms. Mary Gregory, Science Curriculum Specialist, St. Lucie County School District, Means Court Center, 532 No. 13th St., Ft. Pierce, FL 34950, 561.468.5155.

INDEPENDENT STUDY/MENTORSHIP AT CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL (TEXAS): This collaboration between Central High School and the Southeast Texas School-to-Work Partnership offers teachers an integrated, academic curriculum in which students address workplace or community challenges. Teachers facilitate students' independent studies, and community leaders spend time in the classroom. Students select mentors, conduct research, develop and present projects in which they contribute to their community, explore career possibilities, and engage in a trial job search. Course objectives have been adapted to fit the State's Advanced Social Studies objectives.

The Independent Study/Mentorship course includes six broad learning assignments and assessments, personalized by students' choices for career exploration. The class is held the last period of the day, so that students can spend at least three hours a week at the workplace. During the 1997-1998 school year, students interned in pediatrics, law, social work, chemical engineering, optometry, computer engineering, orthodontics, television broadcasting, and real estate.

Contact Information

Ms. Jane Wilson, Gifted and Talented Teacher, Central High School, 88 Jaguar Drive, Beaumont, Texas 77702, 409.981.7100; Ms. Ann Pennington, Director, School-to-Careers, Texas Education Agency, Division of Programs and Instruction, 1701 Congress Avenue, Rm 2-145H, Austin, TX 78701, 512.936.2232, apenning@tmail.tea.state.tx.us.

ROLE MODELS AND LEADERS PROJECT (VIRGINIA): Unique Approach: Twenty Saturday morning science and technology mentoring sessions for at-risk minority and female gifted high school students. The Center for Excellence in Education (CEE), founded by the late Admiral H. G. Rickover, established the Role Models and Leaders Project (RMLP) in 1991 to increase the number of minorities and girls who pursue careers in science, technology, and business. Juniors and seniors attend 20 Saturday sessions at corporate and educational facilities during a 12-month period. Students learn about scientific concepts and their relevance to various professions, career and college planning options, and how to conduct a job search. RMLP has been adopted in Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and Chicago, with 750 students completing it.

Contact Information

Ms. Jeneen Robinson, Metropolitan Washington National Coordinator, Center for Excellence in Education, 7710 Springhouse Road, Suite 100, McLean, VA 22102, 703.448.9062, jeneen@cee.org. Mr. Manuel M. Arellano, Los Angeles Site Coordinator, Phineas Banning H.S., 1527 Lakme Ave., Wilmington, CA, 90744, marellan@lausd.k12.ca.us. Marc Siciliano, Chicago Site Coordinator, John G. Shedd Aquarium, Lakeview H.S. 4015 No. Ashland, Chicago, IL 60613.

Finding the Resources

What Parents and Educators Need to Know About School To Work Programs in California

BY VICTORIA BORTOLUSSI

We all want our children to be happy, and as they grow older, we also hope they will be independent. To be happy and independent, we hope our children will find a profession or career that will be both personally and economically fulfilling. As parents and educators we have this hope and responsibility. We know education is more than "training for a job." But is also more than learning to be an educated individual. More importantly, schools and colleges, teachers and parents, must all model and teach learning how to learn as our lifelong profession.

In addition to lifelong learning, there must be lifelong earning, and that involves a profession or career. We need to help our children discover what they might want to be when they grow up and help them achieve those goals, all the while knowing that what they actually become as they grow will be constantly changing. So flexibility is also the key.

California Communities Currently Receiving Grants

Los Angeles County Office of Education (Downey)

East Bay School-to-Career Partnership' Project (Hayward)

Napa County Office of Education (Napa)

Orange County Department of Education (Orange County)

Sacramento Regional School-to-Career Alliance (Sacramento)

Workforce Silicon Valley' (Santa Clara)

East San Gabriel Valley' Regional Occupational Program (West Covina)

Colleges and schools are changing to address the needs of the learner rather than the objectives of the teacher. The teacher and the student can learn together. Part of what they talk about is the student's future. That is where School to Career, California's version of the School to Work Act, comes in. This educational reform initiative specifically mandates that gifted students be included in receiving grant funds which now have been given to every county in California. This funding ends in two years, so it is important that you act now to get the share that should rightfully be used to enable gifted students to explore future professions and learn how to get where they want to go.

NATIONAL LEARNING CENTER

School to Work for gifted students is so important nationally, that individuals in the U.S. Department of Education have been employed to devote full time to it. More information can be obtained by contacting the national School to Work Learning Center at 1-800-251-7236.

The School to Career movement has many people employed at the state level to administer millions of dollars annually to local school districts. California received its funding late, so we are in the last two years of the funding cycle. We do not expect School to Work/Career to be renewed for political reasons. However, much of what the funds can and should do is institutionalize what is being called systemic change—change to the educational system. It is important that gifted learners have a significant and special role in this change so it serves their needs.

CALIFORNIA WEBSITE

More information can be obtained at the California School to Career website www.stc.ca.gov or by calling 1-800-962-8821. The state has been divided into regions, similar to the CAG regions, including K-12 and colleges. I am the regional school to career coordinator for a region which includes San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Bakersfield. Our region is cochaired by Sandra Mittlestead who works closely with Ron Fontaine at the Bakersfield Office. All regions have a K-12 regional chair and one from the community college. The regions have only a small amount of funding to coordinate the county grants. The significant dollars are with the county grants and to learn more about them, one needs to contact the county School to Career grant directors. Specific information about contact people is available on the website or by telephoning. The regional coordinators can assist in supporting and making the contact.

Every grant awarded must address the following requirement:

> Participation of All Students: Provide a description of how the partnership will provide equal access and service to all students, including outreach, recruitment, enrollment, and placement to all segments of the community. This includes adult students, out-of-school youth, disabled students, GATE students, students in non-traditional schools and mainstream students (see STWOA, and National STW Office Glossary). Demonstrate that broad segments of the community are represented on local STC partnership boards, advisory groups, councils etc.

See FINDING RESOURCES, 41

Ask, Learn, & Act

Become an Effective Parent Advocate

BY VIRGINIA MCQUEEN

Education has become a political theme at state and federal levels. The goal is to improve student achievement with no excuses permitted. This is a very laudable goal, however, it has certain ramifications for the gifted. With an emphasis on raising test scores there may be a tendency for drill and practice to prepare for norm-referenced tests, and that takes up precious time within the school day that could be spent in learning and applying critical thinking and problem solving skills.

"Differentiation" or modification of the curriculum, is an established effective teaching strategy appropriate for gifted education; however, it is not an integral part of the norm-referenced test scenario. As schools strive to improve achievement scores, we must not allow the state standards for gifted education to be neglected. The role of parents as advocates for all students at the school site and district level is important. The participation of GATE parents at the school site in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of programs is essential to ensure the appropriate teaching, curriculum content, and environment for learning to occur for gifted students.

Advocacy for gifted students has been a personal quest for 35 years. It began in the post Sputnik era when the United States was scrambling to catch up and then excel in the space age. For the first time in California, legislation was written to provide programs for the brightest and the best which we called the Mentally Gifted Minors (MGM).

It has been an interesting time to be in education. There are just as many questions in my mind today as there have been answers accumulating over the years. In fact, many of the answers have changed as the education system has evolved. One might conjecture that changes in society have the most effect on education; however, within the past few years the most significant force for change has come from the business community and law makers who want to make the system "better" to compete in a world economy. Change is the name of the game!

Confusion cannot be part of the change game, however, if we are to provide the best for those students who will become the movers, shakers, and leaders for the next generation. This article refers specifically to the rules and regulations for California schools, but the underlying principals for meeting the needs of special needs students should have no geographical bounds for parents of gifted children. Using the laws and regulations as guides, the questions to ask and some information to help you find your own answers are presented here. They are not meant to be all inclusive or profound, rather some questions to get you started or continue on your own personal quest to be an advocate for your gifted child.

PROGRAM OPTIONS

Ask: How are decisions about the Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) program made in the district and at my child's school? What are my opportunities to be involved?

You should know: The governance model for schools, how they are funded, and the laws which support specially funded programs are essential information to being an informed participant. There are two common modes in California:

- school-based model - the site makes decisions on how to spend the state allocated GATE funds for that school site
- district managed model -decisions are made primarily at the district level for a district-wide program

If a site is school-based there must be a council drawn from the total school community that is responsible for activities focused on improving student achievement. District based committees may be general and include representatives from all groups or may be designated for specific programs such as Special Education, English Language Learners, or Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students. Parents of gifted students should be represented within any group that has responsibilities for program planning and evaluation.

Action: Ask your site principal or the district GATE coordinator for a copy of the site and/or district GATE plan and become familiar with it.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

Ask: How are GATE students identified in my district?

You should know: In California, each district establishes its own identification criteria subject to approval by the State board of Education. It must be comprehensive and include procedures for identification which examine the student's abilities to participate in the program regardless

See ASK AND LEARN, 43

PUSHY PARENTS

Continued from 1

and that you understand the monumental tasks they are facing with limited time and money. Some suggestions are listed here.

- Serve as a mentor to an individual student, perhaps with one who is accelerated in reading or mathematics.
- Serve as a coach for Future Problem Solving, Odyssey of the Mind, Academic Decathlon, Junior Great Books, Math Olympiad, History Day, or Science Fair.
- Organize a lending library of professional materials for parents and educators.
- Assist in compiling, editing, or printing a newspaper or anthology of student work.
- Provide career exploration for students.
- Compile student interest surveys.
- Use the Internet to research a topic being studied in class and share the information and website with the class.
- Research material for a local music concert, drama production, or art exhibit. Share the information with students and transport them to the performance.
- Judge contests such as science fairs, mock trial competitions, or invention conventions.
- Arrange for a guest speaker, a field trip, or a student shadowing experience.
- Transport students to the public library and assist them in a computer search or the use of the reference room.
- Organize and lead a book discussion group.
- Offer to videotape a school event.
- Make computer mailing labels or computer generated certificates for students.
- Assist in collating and preparing a mailing.
- Donate books or a magazine subscription to the school library.
- Spearhead a school ground beautification project. Donate time and plantings.
- Organize a fine arts day. Invite local artists and performers.
- Offer to teach an after-school or Saturday class in an area of your expertise or interest.

Educators, parents, and community persons are appointed to serve on district committees such as: district advisory committees, textbook selection committees, building parent-teacher committees, financial oversight committees, and building and property committees. Parents who support individual school board members in their campaigns for office, also have their ear when a concern about gifted education arises. Attending school board meetings, or better yet, being a candidate for the school board, indicates you care about education. A friendly face gets a warmer reception when it's time to discuss a difficult situation.

BE INFORMED

What do you need to know to be an effective advocate? More than you think! Understand the budget, the educational philosophy, board members' positions, and the organizational hierarchy of your entire school system. What is the district mission statement and what are the board policies? Who has the power and who makes the decisions? Read the board minutes to understand the issues facing the school system. Attend board meetings and observe who speaks, how they dress, what style is effective.

Next, become an expert on gifted education, both in your district and nationally. What is the district policy statement regarding gifted education? What is the funding source? Is it adequate? What are the state regulations and funding guidelines? Who is the coordinator of gifted education and who is on the staff? In what talent areas are students served? What assessment methods are used to identify gifted students? What are the program components for serving these children? Learn about gifted children and gifted education in general. Read books, attend conferences, talk to parents in neighboring districts. Visit with teachers and other professionals, and with area and state gifted consultants to discover the acceptable practices in gifted education.

To know yourself and know your children is the most important element of all. Are you comfortable with who you are? Do you understand your children's abilities and shortcomings? What are your strengths? How can you make them work for you? What are your liabilities? What traits do you have in common with your children? Many parents have found the SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted) model of guided discussion groups helpful in understanding both themselves and their children. This ten week series based on the book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*, provides opportunities to read, discuss, and interact with other parents to better understand the behaviors and parenting skills needed to support gifted children. Being confident in your own abilities is the first step to success.

USE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Educators and parents share some common goals for the emotional, social, and academic growth of children. Both want students to acquire some basic knowledge, some thinking and problem-solving skills; to develop their gifts, talents, and creativity; to attain social skills, a good self-concept, and a lifelong love of learning. To achieve these goals for your children, it is imperative that parents and educators become partners rather than adversaries. Although the child the school sees is the same child you send out the door each morning, teachers and parents relate to the child from different perspectives. Each has unique insights into the child's needs, aspirations, interests, and aptitudes. Cooperation between school and home can be powerful in contribut-

ing to students' success later in life.

When you wish to communicate with the school, follow the chain of command by talking first to the classroom teacher. He or she has the most knowledge about your student. Teachers are increasingly more informed about gifted children and their educational needs, but are also hampered by the constraints of the educational system in which they work and the demand to meet the diverse needs within their classroom. Many teachers have had no formal preservice training in gifted education and only limited inservice. Despite these handicaps, most are willing to cooperate with parents in finding appropriate educational solutions.

True communication is hearing what others say, sensing what they are feeling, and responding empathically to both. An attitude of "What can we do together for my child?" receives a more positive response than one of blaming or asking, "What are YOU going to do?" Prepare for a conference by discussing with your child his or her feelings about school. Identify specific behaviors or interests in your child. To establish a common understanding, initially ask for the teacher's overall perception about the child. Then build on the positives as shared by the teacher. Be diplomatic, respectful, and tactful. Learning the educational jargon and the terms for various gifted education delivery methods increases your credibility and respect with the teacher. Be aware of your body language and the words you choose. You may want to avoid some "hot button" words such as, "bored," "brilliant," "always," "last year!" Some "softener" phrases might include, "I'm curious about…" "I'm wondering if…," "Can you help me understand…" It is far better to ask questions than make demands. "Have you thought about…?" "I wonder what would happen if…?"

If you bring examples of products produced outside the school day, or results from private psychological tests, introduce them in a way that is not threatening to the teacher. Not, "See, I told you she was smart," but rather, "I know you are interested in each individual student, and I thought you might enjoy seeing these examples of Mary's work." Parents can share the child's out-of-school interests, skills, leisure time activities, and home responsibilities; things the child especially enjoys about school or experiences the child finds frustrating; any unusual happenings that might affect the emotional well-being of the child. Be specific about concerns. Focus on solutions or problem-solving attempts that can be achieved in small steps. Try to come to an agreement on a plan of action. If the suggestion is one you cannot accept, reflect on the possibilities and indicate you will follow up at a later date. Express a willingness to work together and to be informed. Be positive about the child, the teacher, and the school.

Only after conferring with the child's teacher should you move on to the next person in command. Even then, it is wise to inform or include the teacher in a conference with the principal. Other persons that might be helpful are the supervisor or director of gifted education and curriculum supervisors. If you are still experiencing frustration over your child's education, it might be appropriate to talk to the director of elementary or secondary education, an assistant superintendent, or a superintendent. Involving the board of education is a last resort! Educators dislike being questioned by the board of directors and this can lead to hostile feelings toward a parent by administrators.

KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A GIFTED PROGRAM

Parents can effect change in the gifted program if they ask questions such as the following:

- Does the district have a clearly written plan with a philosophy and goals specifically for gifted students?
- Does the identification method use multiple criteria?
- Are teachers who serve the gifted supportive and have they received appropriate training?
- Are there multiple programming components designed to meet individual needs and learning styles, and are they articulated across grade levels?
- Is there an emphasis on problem solving, higher-level thinking, and student-generated products of high quality?
- Is curriculum presented at an appropriate level and pace?
- Do students have opportunities to interact with ability-level peers?
- Does the program have a component for parent and community involvement?
- Does the program address the social and emotional needs unique to gifted students?
- In addition to academics that are recognized as part of the total school curriculum, are there after-school and Saturday enrichment opportunities in the areas of student interests?
- Does the program have a systematic and on-going evaluation?

JOIN WITH OTHER PARENTS

Parents joining together can speak collectively for the needs of gifted children. A parent support group offers moral support and an opportunity to increase your knowledge about gifted students and appropriate educational opportunities. Meet with a nucleus of other parents who share a concern for the needs of gifted children. Involve the district coordinator. Perhaps he or she will be willing to give you names of other parents, or notify them of a meeting time and place. Establish a minimum structure for the group: officers, bylaws, meeting date, dues structure. Funds will be needed for communication, refreshments, and mileage for speakers. Plan interesting and informative programs. At one of the first meetings, school personnel might give an overview of the

district's gifted and talented education program, its structure, personnel, and funding. Communication with members and programs of interest to parents are essential for maintaining a successful group.

These program ideas have been used: a presentation on the characteristics of gifted children; a parent-child creative writing night; a discussion of state legislative issues; planning, searching and applying for college; creative activities in the home; the social-emotional needs of gifted children; competitions for gifted students; parents as volunteers; a summer opportunities fair; a local librarian sharing the latest books for children and parents; family games night; parenting young gifted children; appropriate computer games and websites.

Some parent groups reach out to the community by enlisting the mayor to issue a proclamation for Gifted Education Week, providing scholarships to summer programs; organizing Saturday or summer enrichment classes taught by their members, contributing books or magazines to school libraries, or honoring gifted students for special awards or achievements.

If parents feel supported, informed, and connected with other parents, they can become a powerful advocacy group. When the president of the parent group addresses the board of education or writes to the administration, it is as a representative of all the gifted children in the district, not just a single person advocating for his or her child. There is power in numbers!

Are pushy parents getting a bad rap? Perhaps. But informed parents who advocate for their gifted children are a necessity if gifted education programs are to survive! ■

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Call for Articles

In this issue we included Carol Danz' article, "The Best of Both Worlds." It was the result of a reader who had an experience to share; she contacted us and we encouraged her to describe the steps required in setting up a part-time homeschool program for her children. We know there are others with experiences or ideas that could benefit our readers. If you are hesitant to write yourself, let us know your idea so that an editor can interview you and turn in an article. Think about what you could contribute to one of our upcoming themes.

Issue	Theme	Manuscript deadline
Winter 2000	Math and Science for gifted students	October 15, 1999
Spring 2000	Identification: Best practices and new trends	January 15, 2000
Summer 2000	Developing passion, leadership, and ethics in gifted youth	April 15, 2000
Fall 2000	Special needs of highly gifted children	July 15, 2000

Guidelines for Article Submissions:

1. Manuscripts should be between 1000 and 2500 words
2. E-mail or send a disk (Mac or PC) with manuscript saved as text (ASCII) file (e-mail preferred)
3. Send or fax a hardcopy (double-spaced) of your manuscript
4. Include a cover sheet with your name, address, telephone, fax number, and/or e-mail with a brief biography

Submissions should be sent to:
Margaret Gosfield, Communicator Editor, 3136 Calle Mariposa, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.
Tel: 805-687-9352, Fax: 8-5-687-1527, e-mail: gosfield@aol.com

The *Communicator* staff reserves the right to edit all material in accordance with APA style and *Communicator* policy.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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to achieve as well or better, then the child would be a candidate for independent study. Talk with your district about the possibility.

BUILDING A CASE FOR A PROPOSAL

This meant that the opportunity for such a proposal lay in the hands of our own school district. With the help of friend and mentor, Dr. Robin Schader at the National Research Center for the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT), as well as valuable resources from NRC/GT and CAG (and a good credit card!), I began the process of drafting an Individualized Learning Program (ILP—to distinguish it from an IEP). I depended a great deal on NRC/GT resources and several of Renzulli's books. Much like an IEP, the ILP enabled me to pursue a "student with special needs" proposal for our gifted children. Without it, it would have been more difficult for the district to justify my part-time homeschool request.

It was also essential that I had a good working relationship with our children's teachers, principal, and our superintendent. As Site Council President, PTA board member, and member of the district Parent Advisory Committee, I was able to have regular communication with these people, all of whom were critical to the process.

I first approached our daughters' teachers casually about the matter. Without boring or overwhelming them with details, I asked for their input on the idea. We determined that since Fridays were largely review days with little new material presented in class, they would be good days for home enrichment. Upon receiving their input and support, I proceeded to speak to the principal, and eventually the superintendent. We then contacted individuals at the county education office who were well-versed in education code provisions.

DISTRICT CONCERNS

Our district had legitimate concerns about a proposal such as ours. They included:

- parents might not adequately implement an ILP once drawn up and approved
- parents might not be willing to learn gifted education methodology before attempting to teach gifted children at home
- there might be a flood of requests for the option and the district needed time to work through a pilot program first
- prior approval of teachers, principal, and superintendent was necessary to assure curriculum compacting for our children Monday through Thursday.

As a result, assurances of parent responsibilities and approval of interested parties were written into the proposal. (Note: parents need not be professional educators to provide suitable at-home enrichment for their gifted children. Parents merely need to do some homework and use the wealth of resources available to us to do so!)

Dr. Schader stressed the importance of not "steam rolling" anyone with our idea. We found the gentle persuasion approach absolutely necessary in maintaining dialogue with the necessary parties. It was also critical that I tempered my occasional overenthusiasm and newly acquired knowledge of these matters in our discussions.

As simple as the request sounds, it took some tenacity in getting it approved. Timing was also an important factor. To my good fortune, the time was now ripe in our district for such an idea because our district homeschool charter had just been put into place and other progressive programs had also been recently approved. The entire process took approximately two years of self-education, as well as a great deal of drafting, writing, and rewriting of this advocacy proposal.

PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

The ILP is employed much like any homeschool operation. The advantage to this is that a parent can rely on the school to provide basic state-mandated instruction; what is taught at home is largely driven by student interest. Depending on one's preferences, a parent can enrich that basic content or present something entirely separate to their children. For example, while our daughters were learning about Africa in school, we pursued a study of "Inventions" at home, something our daughters were very interested in. Naturally it had to be modified for our 5-year-old and our 7-year-old.

Our plan currently falls under our district's Independent Study/Homeschool Charter umbrella, overseen by our Director of Independent Studies—the "credentialed employee" under whom we operate. The proposal is currently a pilot program for this school year; the results will then be reviewed by the superintendent, and with his approval, it will be presented to our local school board; we hope it will then be offered to other parents of gifted children within this district for the next school year.

To say that this is a rich experience for our family would be an understatement. We are able to apply the ideas from CAG conferences and NRC/GT research results to our daughters' homeschooling experience. This has truly excited them about learning. Our children express enjoyment for their homeschool days while also benefiting from the special experiences of their public school classrooms. They are pursuing learning at a level matching their abilities and interests. What a joy this has been for us as parents! ■

CAROL DANZ is currently a full-time mother working on a master's degree in gifted populations using this proposal as part of her thesis. She may be reached at ajancd@aol.com.

GIFTED ADULTS

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- Finding a common language to describe experience and express needs is difficult and takes a great deal of work.
- Others may be perceived as warped or psychologically damaged and thus incapable of holding up their part of relationships.
- Values may differ greatly creating fractures in relationships.
- Finding common areas of interest or passion may be difficult.

In order to help to counter these negatives we can try the following:

- Respect and honor individual differences.
- Model acceptance of differences.
- Adjust expectations to incorporate individual differences.
- Assume that the reality described by the other person is OK—try not to automatically look for pathology.
- Be sure both people in the relationship are knowledgeable about OEs.
- Reframe for one another. Try to describe your experience in a way that makes sense to the other person. Use metaphors, examples from literature, art, theater, the animal kingdom, etc.
- Seek like people to provide the emotional, intellectual, imaginational, sensual, physical support you are unable to get within the relationship.
- Remember that overexcitabilities are innate abilities which need to be accepted with grace as one would accept shoe size, or handedness.

LEARN PRACTICAL COPING SKILLS

The first four affective needs of gifted adults can be greatly facilitated and enhanced by incorporating two basic coping skills: recognizing and dealing with stress, and learning effective communication skills. The two sets of skills are vital because they help individuals deal with the increased stress, intensity, and feelings of differentness which are often outcomes of being gifted.

RECOGNIZE AND DEAL WITH STRESS

Everyone deals with stress on a daily basis. But frequently gifted individuals have increased stress reactions because of their psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional makeup. There are many programs and books about stress reduction. The key components are to (1) learn to identify your own stress symptoms: headache, back ache, pencil tapping, pacing, etc. (2) develop strategies for coping with your stress: talk about your feelings to someone, do relaxation exercises, include physical exercise regularly into your day, change your diet, do daily meditations/visualizations, ask for help, develop organizational and time management skills and (3) develop strategies to prevent stress: make time for fun, develop a cadre of people to help, advise, humor you, become more tolerant of your own and others' imperfections. Take time to map out a plan for you and your family members to deal with stress. (See Hipp, 1985 for additional information.)

LEARN AND USE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Good communication skills are useful on multiple levels, from improving the chances of getting what you want, to nurturing and facilitating growth in others. Regardless of one's motivation for learning these skills, the outcomes will include less stress, greater self-acceptance, greater understanding from and about others, and less daily friction at home, work or in the grocery store.

When learning communication skills be sure to include both verbal—listening, responding, questioning, telephoning, problem solving (Faber and Mazlish, 1980) and nonverbal—rhythm and use of time, interpersonal distance and touch, gestures and postures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and style of dress (Nowicki, 1992). Verbal and nonverbal skills improve interpersonal communication and help individuals better fit in when they wish to, try to change the system if necessary, and most importantly treat themselves and others respectfully.

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acceptable to the parent. This is an essential element in providing a supportive psychological environment. With the encouragement and support of significant adults, gifted students have the integral ability to make sense of their world and be involved in making meaningful decisions concerning their own activities. In this type of supportive environment, children learn to respect and accept the values and decisions of their parents. Such an atmosphere also provides the opportunity for the development of self-respect and positive self-esteem. Helping your child develop an "I can do it" attitude is an important first step in this process. Such phrases as, "I can't," "I should," "I don't care," "There is nothing to do," and "Do I have to?" should not be accepted by parents. Parents can change a negative attitude into a positive attitude by consistently following these guidelines:

- Provide challenging opportunities and activities
- Share in activities that are novel and interesting.
- Provide a variety of nurturing experiences and activities
- Redirect a child's attention from negative to positive
- Reject whining or inappropriate behavior

As a parent, it is your responsibility to guide and support your children's choices. Point out the alternatives and consequences of their choices, and allow them to make decisions appropriate for their age.

INSTILL RESPONSIBILITY

Helping your children become responsible for themselves is key to their becoming successful and happy. Many young people take on the role of "victim," blaming others for their failures, unhappiness, and problems. We need to realize that we can control our attitudes, and even though we may not always be able to control situations in which we find ourselves, some situations are the result of choices we make. Many parents do not allow their children to make mistakes or to fail. By protecting our children from difficulties, we do not allow them to learn how to confront and solve problems. If you intervene when your children have peer conflicts, they will not know how to solve such conflicts as an adult. If you do your children's homework or science projects, not only do you prevent them from learning to face the consequences of their actions, but you also rob them of the feeling of accomplishment that comes from a job well done. The support you provide may help your children for the moment, but lessens the likelihood that positive attributes such as perseverance and determination will be learned.

BE A ROLE MODEL

You can help your children become happier and more successful by acting as a role model. Discuss issues openly and deal with life creatively. Your willingness to take a risk and live life creatively will be an inspiration for your children. Also, by providing quality time for your children you will develop a close relationship. It is important to play together. Visit parks, museums, historical places, and athletic events. Have family meetings to discuss issues or concerns. Allow family members an equal opportunity to express their opinions. Helping your children learn to prioritize their time is very useful and meaningful. Too often, gifted children become over scheduled. This causes a great deal of anxiety and many important tasks, such as homework, are not completed. By sharing strategies you have learned to manager your time, you can model successful behavior for your children.

PROVIDE LOVE AND SUPPORT, NOT REWARDS

It is very important to validate your children by loving them unconditionally rather than rewarding them materially when receiving top grades. Although gifted children are very intelligent and understand concepts beyond their years of experience, they are still socially and emotionally children. Be patient and fair in all interactions. However, do not allow them to be manipulative. It is not necessary for children to get everything they want. In fact, it is harmful and sends a false message about reality.

By providing guidance and emotional support, parents can nurture their children as much as their children's maturity dictates. Obviously, less mature or younger children need more support and guidance in making decisions. Children are all uniquely different, and parents must learn to recognize their child's needs and be ready to support and encourage their endeavors.

As stated earlier, much of who we are and how we act is learned. How we think determines how we feel, and how we act is determined by our thoughts and feelings. Therefore, developing positive attitudes is an important step toward becoming successful and happy. There are no simple answers, however, there are some guidelines.

CLUES LEADING TO A HAPPIER LIFE

- Think of life as a process of choices
- Listen to and trust your inner voice
- Take responsibility for yourself
- Experience each day more fully
- Dare to be different
- Do what you do best
- Open yourself up to others
- Be willing to take risks
- Treat others with respect and dignity

No one said it was easy being a parent. Parents are human too. Sometimes you are tired or sad, and sometimes you don't even know the answer. But that's okay, because you're not expected to be perfect either. As each of us has the oppor-

tunity to interact with a child, it seems important to stop for a moment and reflect upon those situations and circumstances that had a powerful and lasting influence on our lives. Remembering the qualities of those people who helped to change our lives in positive ways may provide a guide for how we interact with others. Our greatest contribution may be to have a role in making a positive difference in the life of a child. That child may be your son or daughter.

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PARENT VOLUNTEERS

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SPECIAL EVENT SUCCESS

I asked Karen to brainstorm with me ideas for a musical stage production that could involve all students in my 5th grade. Together we came up with an idea that was a huge success; "Fashions through the Century" featured the clothing fashions, historical events, and popular music for each decade of the 1900's. Again with Karen's help, we recruited other parents to form the planning and working committees. While the script was being written, another parent researched and recorded on tape the popular music of each decade. Another parent designed the fashions, and the whole class worked on scenery and stage lighting. It all came together on show week with students dressed in fashion costumes, singing songs, and speaking their lines on cue. Two students, dressed as the Wright Brothers, walked the runway while the chorus sang "My Flying Machine." A boy in his little league uniform played the role of Jackie Robinson, as the class sang "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." A group of girls dressed as flappers and danced the "Charleston." Everyone had a role in the production. Karen directed the choreography and I was busy directing backstage traffic.

The afternoon, all-school, program was a hit. Two night performances for the general public even made enough from ticket sales to cover our out-of-pocket expenses. It was a wonderful learning experience for students, and I was convinced that parent help would always be a part of my teaching. Karen and I were mutually grateful for what we had accomplished together. She really wanted to play an active role in her son's education. I needed the energy and talent that this mother had to share. The students were the real winners. I've had individual students tell me years later that the play was a highlight of their fifth grade year.

IN LOVE WITH SHAKESPEARE

Mr. G. was another parent who really had an impact on my students. At back-to-school night he volunteered to introduce Shakespeare to my class. When I asked him to give me more details, he was vague and I was skeptical. He was a firefighter by occupation and had no real claim to expertise, but he was interested in Shakespeare as a hobby. He wanted the students to love the Bard as he did. I invited him to talk to the class about Shakespeare, thinking that would be the end of it. His talk with the students was very inspiring. The students gave him their complete attention and showed more interest than I expected.

From then on Mr. G. came to class every week and did Shakespeare with my students. First he read to them and explained the meaning of the old English expressions. Then he progressed into a kind of reader's theater with students reading scenes from Shakespeare's works. The students began to study and rehearse their parts before each Shakespeare lesson. Weekly topics included the Elizabethan theater, geography related to the play being studied, and clothing and costumes of the times.

Later in the school year, at the students' request, our class performed a shortened version of *Romeo and Juliet* for the whole school. Mr. G. helped organize other parents into committees to browse the thrift stores for articles of clothing, accessories, and props, and to make the costumes. In addition to learning about the world of Shakespeare, all of the students showed improvement in their self-confidence, poise, patience, and their ability to work as a team.

Mr. G. brought a love for literature into the classroom. He wasn't a teacher or a scholar, but he had a passion for Shakespeare which he willingly shared with the class. We were fortunate that his work schedule as a firefighter allowed him the time to volunteer in the classroom on a regular basis.

PROFESSOR ENRICHES CLASSROOM—SON GAINS SELF-CONFIDENCE

Professor K. was another parent

whose contributions made a difference. At one of my "Parent Volunteer Meetings," Professor. K. offered to do a guest presentation on the music of strings. He was a music professor at a local university, and his son was a student in my class. I was pleased to include him in our schedule for two reasons. First, the music program at our school had been cut nearly to the bone and these students needed more general information in that area. Secondly, I was concerned about Prof. K's son. He was smaller than his peers and was frequently the target of the other students' jeering and teasing. I saw him as a sensitive boy who had low self-esteem and was a semi-isolate in the class.

On the afternoon of the presentation, Eric K. helped his dad carry several boxes and cases into the classroom. Prof. K. was experienced and at ease in front of a class. His talk was punctuated with brief demonstrations of making music. He showed several old and new stringed instruments and described how each part contributed to the qualities of the music. He passed around a very valuable, century-old, violin for the students to see and touch. Then he played a short passage on each of his display instruments to show the subtle differences. The students were very attentive. The finale of the event was when Prof. K. and his son, Eric, played a violin duet together. It was positively breathtaking.

Up until that time the students had not treated Eric with respect. They were unwilling to include him in their games. He was the last one to be picked on a team, and they did not want to be paired with him during work or study time. Now they were amazed that this boy could stand in front of them and play the violin with such talent. They were really impressed and so was I. In fact, they stood to give him a rousing "bravo," and asked for another song. Seeing the grin on his face was priceless. Eric had gained new status with his peers that lasted all year long.

COUNSELING EXPERTISE

Mrs. F. was a family and marriage counselor whose daughter was in my class. During the year she arranged to conduct a class discussion to help me deal with some negative attitudes and personality conflicts that were escalating to the point of involving the whole class. Mrs. F. facilitated a class meeting to discuss the problem behaviors and their impact on others. Under her guidance, the students recognized the problems and established a plan for improvement. She also had a private session with the students who were more directly involved.

On another occasion one of our classmates died in a car accident. The entire school was shocked with grief, and our regular school counselor was not available. I knew Mrs. F. well enough to feel confident that she would be professional, use discretion, and could conduct counseling sessions in a constructive and positive manner. She was a tremendous help to the students in coping with their grief.

Over the years, I have used volunteer parents to enrich and extend my curriculum, to add new dimensions to classroom activities, and to provide resources to the students. The few examples cited above serve to highlight some of the benefits of inviting parents to be a part of the GATE classroom. There are many other examples that could be described.

Mrs. W. was a judge. Our class made a very special field trip to her courtroom one day. Students enjoyed trying on her robe, sitting in the jury box, and seeing the judge's chambers in the back room.

Mrs. A. taught students to play the song flute a half hour each week. Students developed music skills that might have been ignored without Mrs. A's talents.

Mr. P. was an engineer who helped me in an ecological park unit. Each year students surveyed a neighborhood park and designed an ideal recreation area to meet specified ecological conditions. One year Mr. P. brought his professional surveyor's transit and demonstrated its use in laying out a topographical map of the park.

ANNUAL FAMILY POTLUCK

One event that has always been a highlight of the year involves volunteers in a family potluck dinner. All students complete an extensive study and report on one of the United States. They prepare a "show and tell" including costumes, products, and important features of their state shown on a salt-ceramics map. Following their brief presentations in the multi-purpose room, we all line up for the potluck dinner. Parents are encouraged to bring food representing a state in the US. It is a fun way to meet in a social environment and to highlight what the students have studied.

BENEFITS FOR ALL

Over the years, I have had many parent volunteers help with tasks such as transportation on field trips, keeping scores on "jog-a-thon" day, and assisting in the classroom in a hundred different ways. When parents take the time from their busy schedules to volunteer in the classroom, it makes a strong statement about their values and attitudes. When they are involved they are supportive, and this is usually reflected in the attitudes of their sons and daughters. I gain as a teacher, the students gain from the enriched curriculum, and even the parents gain. Parents have stated that they have had a fun and productive year. They enjoyed being involved, knowing what was going on in the classroom, and having satisfaction from being an important part of their child's education.

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LABELING

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nitely excludes me but not a friend who enjoys stepping off into space.

The terms "gifted" and "talented" have a number of meanings, resulting in confusion for parents and educators alike. There is a substantial body of research which validates identification of and programming for gifted children. Publishers, state departments of education, county offices, school districts, and institutions of higher education have spent decades perfecting advanced materials and strategies which engage gifted children at higher cognitive levels, in depth, with greater complexity, and at accelerated rates, preparing them for our fast moving information and technological age.Therefore, instead of abandoning the terms, we must be sure they are clearly defined and that we agree on their meaning in whatever context we are working. Let us look, therefore, at some instances in which the use of the label "gifted" is appropriate and when it is not.

MISUSES OF THE LABEL

Labeling children as "gifted" may mean that we are:

1. Focusing on differences (setting people apart from one another) instead of promoting giftedness—focusing on separateness rather than wholeness.
2. Creating a class of children perceived as intrinsically better than other children.
3. Reducing incentives to work harder to achieve high goals.
4. Valuing children for what they can do rather than for what they are.
5. Assigning the best teachers to teach gifted children and other teachers to teach those who are not gifted.

We don't know a book by its cover. The world of appearances presents us with blinders that causes us to fail to recognize giftedness in a large reservoir of untapped ability—including children from disadvantaged backgrounds and disabled children. We must be very careful to not misuse labels.

APPROPRIATE USES OF THE LABEL

Labeling children "gifted" may mean:

1. Recognizing a category of children whose characteristics and needs entitle them to differentiated and more challenging learning.
2. Providing a focal point and a model for differentiating the curriculum and instruction.
3. Providing documented need for legislation assuring adequate funding.
4. Establishing the basis for more rigorous inservice education, curriculum development, individual instruction, and evaluation.
5. Highlighting academic excellence as an appropriate emphasis—along with excellence in athletics, business, technology, and artistic production.
6. Identifying and challenging children for whom we should have higher expectations.
7. Preparing more sophisticated teachers who are skilled in fostering higher intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and extended awareness.
8. Making school an interesting and worthwhile place for children whose lives are guided by a different drummer, who thrive on expanding their capabilities, playing with ideas, seeing new relationships, solving problems, guiding adults (e.g. in computer technology), and for some, participating in the adult world (e.g. managing their own stock portfolios).
9. Motivating excellence in all students and in all aspects of life.
10. Reducing school dropout rates resulting from boredom and little challenge.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As mature adults, we recognize the need at times to down play our use of terms, so as not to raise red flags or antagonize others. In my judgment, it is perfectly all right—especially in the beginning—to refer to a gifted program as an enrichment or advanced learning program. The non-negotiable aspect is that student participants must be clearly identified by appropriate selection criteria and in educational programs uniquely suited for advanced learners. Hopefully those individuals who first saw red may come to recognize and accept, and appreciate the fact that gifted individuals have raised the standard of living for all of us. During times of trouble we seek the services of gifted individuals— a gifted plumber, a gifted auto mechanic, a gifted surgeon, or whatever gifted person will help to solve our problems.

Parents must be especially alert to not wittingly or unwittingly flaunt their children's giftedness with statements such as "Mary was identified as gifted. Was your daughter?" Program support and survival depends upon our being sensitive to the feelings and needs of others—in this case, parents whose children have not been identified as gifted.

The purpose of this article was to introduce the reader to a few common sense ideas about labeling. It might be wise for parents to sit down with teachers and administrators to brainstorm the pros and cons and best uses of labeling; reach a consensus; establish policy; and move forward with greater awareness, understanding, and effectiveness.

Good luck.

DR. PAUL PLOWMAN is the Advising Editor of the CAG Communicator. Past experiences include: 25 years as a California State Consultant in Gifted Education; conference speaker, federal projects director, and president of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted. He can be reached at: PaulPlow@aol.com.

FINDING RESOURCES

Continued from 30

$58 MILLION PLUS IN CALIFORNIA

The state of California will be awarding at least 58 county grants this year, averaging at least $1 million dollars per county, totaling over $58 million. Also, $20 million have been directly awarded to sites including San Diego, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

"School to Work is one of the most promising examples in America today of a community's commitment to their (sic) children's future," said President Clinton. "The linking of the classroom and the workplace is an exciting approach to learning and earning for young Americans. This partnership inspires students, employers and teachers to do their very best. And with our best working for America, we can look forward to setting the pace for global competition as we enter the 21st century."

School To Work dollars have been committed to 81 communities in 42 states and Puerto Rico. Those funds, used as venture capital, develop new methods for making school relevant to real life for thousands of students across the nation.

Since May of 1994 when President Clinton signed the School to Work Opportunities Act into law, more than 42,000 employers have formed School To Work partnerships with educators, parents, students, organized labor, and community,' organizations. Businesses that cannot find employees with strong academic and job skills are recognizing that School To Work provides answers to this problem.

"School to Work gives high school students the tools to apply what is learned in the morning at school directly to what is earned in the afternoon," stated Richard Reich, former Secretary of Education who headed the School to Work Grant Awards. "This will give a new generation of Americans the opportunities their parents and grandparents had before them—to earn their way into the middle class to achieve the American dream."

"School to Work joins the concepts of high academic standards, real-life curriculum and work-based learning experiences to prepare our young people for the challenges of living and working in today's competitive, technologically driven environment," said Secretary Riley.

The administration awarded the grants on a competitive basis from 215 applications submitted nationwide. These awards were funded by STW dollars appropriated in 1995. Under current budget proposals which could drastically reduce 1996 School to Work funds, no new state or local grants would be awarded next year, despite great interest to begin school-to-work programs. Investment in states and communities currently participating also would be reduced or eliminated. Therefore, it is important that your school or district become involved now in order not to miss out on the dollars available. ■

VICTORIA BORTOLUSSI, Ph.D., is Dean, Instructional Advancement, at Moorpark Community College and the School To Career coordinator for Region 8 in California. She is also the immediate past editor of the *Communicator*.

Past Issues Available

The CAG Office carries a limited supply of past issues of the *Communicator*. They are available at a cost of $5.00 per copy plus tax and shipping. Call the office at 310-215-1898 to make your request.

Vol. 30. No. 2, Spring 1999
Gifted Education in Middle Schools

Vol. 30 No. 1, Winter 1999
Gifted Readers

Vol. 29. No. 4, Fall 1998
Teaching Gifted Students

Vol. 29 No. 3, Summer 1998
Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

Vol. 29 No. 2, Spring 1998
Talent and the Arts

Vol. 29. No. 2, Winter 1998
Gifted Education in High Schools

SCHOOL TO WORK

Continued from 29

On the School-to-Work website you can also find descriptions of all five Best Practices and six Unique Approaches for involving gifted and talented students in career exploration and community-based learning (keyword search: gifted). Finally, through the website, you can learn of grant opportunities to fund initiatives in your school district and events and conferences where school to career practitioners gather to share best practices.

Another source of information is the Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Education located in your area. There are ten regional offices throughout the United States. The School-to-Work contact in each office is aware of current activity in your region and can connect you with coordinators of recognized local School-to-Work programs. Regional Office contact numbers are available on the U.S. Department of Education website at: http://www.ed.gov. This site also provides information on currently posted Department of Education grant opportunities. If you have specific questions regarding funding, model programs or printed resources, staff at the School-to-Work Learning Center at 1.800.251.7236 is ready to help.

Motivated gifted and talented learners need not be constrained by course descriptions or school walls. School to Work programs encourage youngsters to identify their interests, set their learning goals, and seek out resource people who can help them achieve their potential. The time is right and the resources are available to get your students involved. ■

Note: We wish to thank Lorraine Kleinwaks, formerly of the National School-to-Work Office, who coordinated the program review process that identified the Best Practices and Unique Approaches serving gifted and talented students.

LOUISE W. STEVENS, Ph.D., Program Specialist for the U.S. Department of Education Region X, 915 2nd Avenue, #3362, Seattle, WA 98174
206-220-7803 fax: 206-220-7806

SCHOOL TO WORK IN ACTION

MICHAEL

Michael was a gifted high school senior-800 math score on his SAT. He was interested in biomedical research but had essentially "used up" the science curriculum at his high school. Through his district's School-to-Work program he was able to secure an internship with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center for which he received advanced science credit. As his intern project he taught a two-day DNA unit for the advanced biology class, sharing cutting edge research from his Fred Hutch project. Based on his outstanding commitment to the project, his mentor, an adjunct faculty at the University of Washington, offered Michael a summer research position, tuition vouchers and guaranteed employment with the project (including recognition on research papers) through his undergraduate years.

MELISSA

In conjunction with a French class assignment to conduct a tour of a French city in French, Melissa contacted a local travel company that runs European tours. She and her guidance counselor eventually drew up a contract with the company indicating what Melissa could learn through a 5 hour per week internship in lieu of her 6th period class. The firm hired Melissa during the summer following her junior year. She has spent the past two summers in France translating for tour groups while earning money to fund her undergraduate education.

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ASK, LEARN & ACT

Continued from 31

of economic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds. This is an equal education access issue which ensures that all students have equitable access and opportunity to participate in and benefit from high quality curriculum and extracurricular activities. It should be evident through practice that "giftedness" occurs in all cultures and ethnic groups and all groups should be represented in the district's program.

Decisions regarding individual student identification for the GATE program should be based on multiple criteria. Some of the most commonly used measurements within districts are:

- achievement scores
- tests which produce an I.Q. or equivalent
- teacher observations
- portfolios of student work

All principals, teachers, and other staff should be trained in the identification process. Once identified, individual students should have access to the programs that are most appropriate for their individual abilities, interests, and needs. The criteria must be included in the district's application to the Department of Education for GATE funds.

Action: When informed of the district's wish to test your child for the gifted program, or status therein, take the opportunity to contact the person who sent the notice. Ask to receive an explanation of the testing process and any publications the district has concerning policies and practices for gifted education such as a GATE Handbook.

FUNDING

Ask: How is money allocated for the GATE program at the site and the district? How much is allocated to the school? Who decides how it is spent?

You Should Know: Funding for schools is very complex, but knowing the basics of funding and services required by the laws which create the funding helps in understanding how the system works and assisting the system in working, especially for the gifted. The education of students is funded by state and federal governments. Local government funding goes to support all students and is usually not directed at special needs groups such as gifted students. Monies that supplement programs for special needs students are called "categorical funds" and are to be used for students who qualify using criteria defined in the law or directives given to school districts for establishing criteria.

In California the GATE program has been the smallest categorical fund. The district receives money from the state based on the average daily attendance of the entire district. The district must include a budget and allocation of funds in its state-approved GATE plan.

Compliance with the law requires that the GATE expenditures are consistent with the budget and program description in the state-approved application the district submits. The district must show that the GATE funds are spent on GATE students as described in the plan. GATE funds are supplemental and may not be used to provide items funded out of regular education monies such as text books and instructional materials that all students should receive. Supplemental texts that are used for accelerated or in-depth instruction for GATE students to provide differentiated curriculum and based on student needs as stated in the plan are examples of appropriate expenditures. The specific amount of GATE funds allocated to your school is determined by the type or types of program in place

Action: If your school's individual allocation is not clear from the district plan, ask for specific school budget information from your school principal or the district GATE Coordinator.

CURRICULUM

Ask: What kind of curriculum should my child receive as an identified GATE student?

You should know: The regulations state that a differentiated or modified curriculum, varied learning opportunities, and varied environments must be provided within the GATE program. The opportunities provided must be based on assessed needs of those students identified as GATE and extend the students abilities, sensitivities, judgment, thinking skills, and self concepts. There must be a site GATE plan that shows the options provided to meet the students needs and the teaching strategies used to meet those needs.

The core curriculum, usually defined as math, reading/language arts, history, and science, must be expanded and include pacing, levels of complexity, depth, novelty, and other expectations regarded as appropriate for gifted students. There should be evidence that challenging assignments are provided for those with above grade level achievement in reading and math. This means that student needs should drive the program rather than the student being made to fit into a program planned before assessing needs. Ideally a combination of acceleration and enrichment should be part of the program.

Evidence of high quality work should be available. Unwritten in the document, but certainly understood, is the need for high quality teachers to deliver the high quality curriculum and provide the high quality learning environment. During a CCR, a visiting team would look for evidence that students receive appropriate and challenging opportunities to excel in a differentiated curriculum. This curriculum may be offered through extended learning activities, part-time grouping or clustering, independent study, or acceleration throughout the school day. A periodically conducted needs assessment coupled with student data and input from parents, student and staff are

part of the program planning process.

Action: Establish a practice of discussing the work and assignments your child does at school and at home. Become familiar with the texts and instructional materials brought home. Look for modifications of the curriculum that offer challenges for your student. Review work produced by your child and encourage self-monitored discipline to produce high quality products. Attend meetings where expectations and practices of the school are presented so that you know how to support your child.

TEACHER TRAINING

Ask: What kind of training do teachers of gifted children receive in the district?

You should know: It is required that the district have clearly defined requisite competencies for all teachers including the ability to provide differentiated or modified learning opportunities for GATE students. A professional development plan for all teachers based on a needs assessment of teachers' needs relative to GATE students should be in place. Written lists of staff competencies and how they are applied in the selection of personnel who teach the gifted should be available. Stated selection procedures for personnel to teach the gifted are to be followed. The district must submit a staff development plan as part of its application for GATE funding which includes several required components:

- clearly defined requisite competencies for all teachers including the ability to provide differentiated or modified learning opportunities for gifted students
- a professional development plan based on a needs assessment of teachers' needs relative to gifted students
- written criteria for the selection of personnel to teach gifted students

Action: Ask the site principal what training the staff at your school has received related to teaching GATE students. Ask to see the staff development plan and the requisite competencies the district has adopted.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Ask: How do I know whether or not the specific GATE program at my child's school is effective?

You should know: Two processes for evaluation of programs are in place in California. The Program Quality Review (PQR) is a state mandate which must be conducted by every school site during a three or four year cycle to assess the quality and effectiveness of programs provided by the school for all students. At the conclusion of the initial year-long review, a program improvement plan must be written and submitted with a plan for implementation to take place over the next two to three years. The second process for evaluation is the Coordinated Compliance Review (CCR), a state and federal mandate which is conducted on a three or four year cycle to ensure that all students are receiving the appropriate services as provided under the law. Commendations are given for items that exceed the requirements. If items are found to be out of compliance, the district has 45 days to submit a plan for bringing the item into compliance. Both the PQR and the CCR processes begin with a self-study and encourage parents and community be involved. There is specific language in both the PQR and CCR guides that address the needs of gifted students. Parent involvement is the opportunity to be part of a valuable process for improving programs for all students.

Action: Ask the site principal or district GATE coordinator for the summary of the latest GATE parent survey and site achievement data.

PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEWS (PQR)

Ask: What is a Program Quality Review?

You should know: Gifted and Talented Education has historically been a part of the Program Quality Review under a section for Special Needs Students. It looks at student work and achievement data for determining a plan for program improvement. The PQR guide and training materials include the state standards and samples of student work as well as very specific guidelines for the review assessment measures for program effectiveness. The achievement data must be examined for all students and then disaggregated, or separated out, into data for each of the special needs groups. Each school must report its achievement data showing the percentage of students who score at or above proficiency levels in reading/language arts and mathematics for total school and special needs groups. This means that there is a separate reporting line for the English Language Learners, Special Education students, and gifted students. A suggested yearly growth goal percentage is calculated for each site so that 90% of all students will be achieving at or above the proficiency level within ten years.

This system gives the entire school and each special needs group a yearly achievement goal. Gifted students are assessed and reported out as a group on their achievement based on what they learn in class. Expectations to achieve rest heavily on those gifted students who are not academically oriented. Enrichment activities funded out of GATE funds may not meet the academic needs of a gifted student. The needs of the underachieving gifted should be recognized within the PQR process and addressed the same as the needs of highly motivated achievers.

The program quality for all students, but particularly for the gifted, should be assessed on the basis of norm-referenced tests such as the

Stanford Achievement Test (SAT 9), writing and math samples taken several times during the year, portfolios which contain student work done over time, and teacher observation. All work should reflect the use of critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving skills.

Part of the Program Quality Review process is to look at all parts of the school's program including school climate and community involvement, to make sure that each student receives appropriate curriculum and instruction delivered in an environment conducive to learning. As a member of the PQR Leadership Team, parents of gifted students can be effective in making sure that the needs of the gifted are included in all school improvement plans and that achievement data for gifted show the required percentage improvement.

Action: Find out when your school is scheduled to conduct a Program Quality Review. Ask if you can be a part of the PQR Leadership Team as a parent or community representative. Become a member of the School Site Council or other groups at the site where information on student achievement, school planning, and budgets is part of the regular agenda.

COORDINATED COMPLIANCE REVIEWS (CCR)

Ask: What is the Coordinated Compliance Review?

You should know: The Coordinated Compliance Review did not include Gifted and Talented Education as a separate component for many years. Compliance items were included under the Categorical Programs section. During the 1998-99 reviews, Gifted and Talented Education was reinstated with a specified program goal and five related dimensions. The program goal is, "To identify gifted and talented students, including those from diverse social, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and provide high quality differentiate opportunities for learning that meet the students' particular abilities and talents." This translates into five specific action areas which the district must have in place in order to comply with the California State Education Code and the statutes which authorize the CCR. These areas include:

- identification
- teaching and learning
- staff development
- parent and community involvement
- funding.

The CCR guide establishes what a visiting review team should look for when testing compliance. This document also can guide staff and parents to plan for programs.

Action: Find out when the CCR self-review is scheduled for your school site. Ask to be part of the group of parents interviewed during the CCR process. Ask to see or get copies of the five-page Gifted and Talented Education portion of the CCR guide.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Ask: How can I be involved in planning and evaluating the GATE program at my school and/or in the district?

You should know: The California State Education Code and the Coordinated Compliance Review statute require the ongoing participation of parents of gifted students in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. There should be meetings throughout the year in which parents are actively engaged in this process. Surveys, gathered in a timely manner, should be summarized and communicated to all concerned with the GATE program. An outreach to all parents should take a variety of forms in appropriate languages.

Action: Parents can assist this process by becoming aware of and attending meetings at the site and district level designed for parent participation such as the District GATE Advisory Committee, or the school-site committee. Volunteer to be a member of the advisory committee.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ask: Where can I get more information that will help me understand more about gifted education?

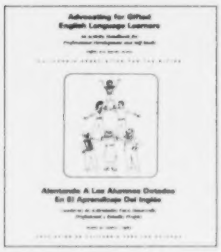
You should know: There are many reliable sources of information about gifted education. There are international, national, and state organizations for the support of gifted education. The California Association for the Gifted offers publications specifically designed for parents which outline the Education Code and give information on advocacy and bibliographic references. As an advocate organization, California Association for the Gifted works closely with the California Department of Education to include appropriate language along with teaching and learning strategies included within publications such as State Curriculum Frameworks and the compliance documents that will assist educators and parents to provide the best learning opportunities for gifted students.

Action: Call the California Association for the Gifted at 310-215-1898 for information and your regional representative's name and number. Call the GATE Office at the California Department of Education at 916-657-3706 for information and guidelines.

Check the following websites: California Association for the gifted at: **www.CAGifted.org** , the California Department of Education GATE at: **www.cde.ca.gov/ci/branch/eltdiv**, and the National Association for Gifted Children at: **www.nagc.org**.

VIRGINIA MCQUEEN is Associate Editor for Curriculum & Technology for the Communicator and a retired GATE educator, parent, and advocate.

NEW from CAG



Advocating for Gifted English Language Learners

An Activity Handbook for Professional Development and Self-Study

Item No. P-05 $12.00/copy

This guidebook presents an overview of the gifted English language learner. The activities can be used for inservice or for individual self-study. Text in English and Spanish.

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1999 CAG FALL INSTITUTES

TEACHER INSTITUTES

Teacher Institutes offer beginning and advanced instruction in differentiating the curriculum through depth, complexity, novelty and acceleration. A technology strand will offer ways to use the computer and the Internet to differentiate the curriculum.

Traditional Format

Attend topical seminars and workshops on developing and teaching differentiated curriculum in the disciplines. This traditional format institute will be offered at the following date and location:

Saturday & Sunday, October 2–3, 1999
Santa Rosa Hilton, Santa Rosa

NEW! Observation Format

Our new format offers the opportunity to observe classroom demonstrations with master teachers, attend follow-up seminars, and write differentiated curriculum. Three institutes are scheduled on the following dates and in the following locations:

Saturday & Sunday, September 25–26, 1999
Hyatt Regency Alicante, Anaheim

Saturday and Sunday, October 9–10, 1999
Palm Springs Marquis Hotel, Palm Springs

Saturday & Sunday, October 16–17, 1999
Best Western Stockton Inn, Stockton

Pre-registration fee: $250 per person

On-site registration: (if space available) $275 per person

Continental breakfast (both days), lunch (Saturday only) and materials included.

Schedule

Saturday: 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Sunday: 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

One-day Parent and **Administrator** Institutes are also scheduled as part of CAG's fall line-up of institutes. Watch your mail for a brochure describing these events or call the CAG Office for information.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CAG PUBLICATIONS

Advocating for Gifted English Language Learners

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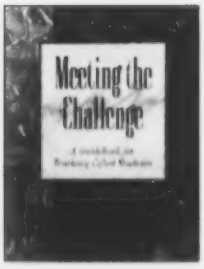
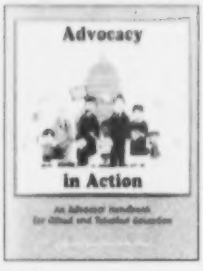


Meeting the Challenge

A Guidebook for Teaching Gifted Students

Item No. P-01 $12.00/copy

Here's a guidebook to answer teachers' most frequently asked questions about gifted education, plus lists of available resources, an easy-to-use annotated bibliography and CAG's comprehensive glossary.



Advocacy in Action

An Advocacy Handbook for Gifted and Talented Education

Item No. P-02 $12.00/copy

CAG's step-by-step guide to effective advocacy on behalf of gifted and talented children and their appropriate education.

The Challenge of Raising Your Gifted Child

Item No. P-03 $12.00/copy

Here's a guidebook to answer parents' most frequently asked questions concerning gifted children, plus resources, both traditional and electronic, to make parenting easier.

Joining Forces

A Guide to Forming Support Organizations for Gifted and Talented Children

Item No. P-04 $5.00/copy

CAG's step-by-step guide to forming affiliate organizations in support of gifted and talented children and their appropriate education.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

If you are *not* already a CAG member, please use the application below to become a continuing supporter of gifted education. Because CAG is active in lobbying efforts to promote appropriate education for gifted and talented students, dues payments are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

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- ☐ *Communicator* Subscription only ($25)

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- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Other

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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

VOLUME 30, NO 4, FALL 1999

ISSUE HIGHLIGHT

YOUNG GIFTED CHILDREN

Young gifted children go largely unidentified and underserved. Since they often do not enter programs for gifted until 3rd or 4th grade, parent expertise in recognizing their talents and advocating for their children is especially vital. This issue attempts to provide a variety of resources and information for both parents and teachers including:

- **The importance of early brain stimulation**
- **Creative means of identification**
- **The value of portfolios to document giftedness**
- **Advocating for young gifted children at school**
- **Recognizing and developing creativity**
- **Social and emotional issues of young gifted children**
- **The importance of play**
- **A special focus on young gifted musicians**

UPCOMING ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Winter - Math & Science

Spring - Identification

Summer - Developing Passion, Leadership, Ethics

Fall - Highly Gifted

Creative Ways to Identify Talent in Your K–3 Classroom

BY JOAN FRANKLIN SMUTNY

Here is Isabella. At the age of 4 she was helping her mother calculate and compare prices on a grocery list at the supermarket in their neighborhood. Numbers intrigued her. She counted every moment she could and seemed hungry to do more. Now she is six and in school, she sits mute in her seat and barely speaks. Isabella is still learning English and feels safest when she is silent. The teacher has no knowledge of her talent in math.

Here is James, a first-grader fascinated by art. By first grade, he had begun a cartoon series called "Fly By Night," a play on words he thought quite clever. It consisted of little humorous vignettes about a fly detective who investigates wrongdoing at night. His mother has amassed piles of evidence of James' prodigious creative gifts, yet his teacher only remarks on his reading disability. Recently, she made him sit in the corner for doodling on his notepad during a spelling class.

See IDENTIFY TALENT, 33

Understanding and Encouraging Young Gifted Children

Social and Emotional Issues

BY ELIZABETH MECKSTROTH

One of the most rewarding and difficult parts about parenting gifted children is that we can't hide. What we are speaks so loudly that sometimes our sensitive, empathetic children can't hear what we are saying. So we teach what we are. This means that our essential job is to model that it is good to grow up and to take good care of ourselves. Just as children who live in a house where English is spoken will learn to speak English, so shall they learn to be problem solvers instead of problem finders, to include exercise as part of their lifestyle, and to compassionately express their feelings and needs, or not.

Starting with Paul Torrance, wise devoted professionals have found that having a mentor is a greater predictor of success than intelligence or creativity. Parents are built-in mentors. Two of the most valued life goals of gifted children are self-respect and happiness. If our young children observe that we are

See YOUNG GIFTED , 37

EC 307617

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PUBLISHED BY THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED

The CAG Communicator is published four times during the year: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Opinions expressed by individual authors do not necessarily represent official positions of the Association. Subscriptions are available to non-members at an annual cost of $25.

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LETTERS

Summer Issue Makes Connections

I especially liked the article on the need to foster adult giftedness [Sharon Lind, "Fostering Adult Giftedness"] and the links of recommended web sites. In fact, I sent the list of sites off to someone today in response to an inquiry on my web site. Thanks!

Terrie Gray, Ed.D.
Founder and Director
ED's Oasis—Connecting, Celebrating, and Inspiring Teachers
www.edsoasis.org

Author Shares Revised Edition Information

What a surprise to open up my copy [of the summer] *Communicator* to find a wonderful review of my book, *Teacher's Guide to Parents of the Gifted/Parents of the Gifted's Guide to Teachers*. I really appreciate the kind words and the fact that people still see value in the advice and information contained therein.

I was quite surprised since the review was done on a copy that came out originally in 1987. Ironically, a revised edition just came off the presses at Royal Fireworks about a month and a half ago. Much of the information inside is the same but there has been some updating, especially the resources. There were no e-mail addresses or web sites in 1987. Plus, so many wonderful new resources, theories and ideas have emerged since then. (Price is still 9.95)

Also, Trillium Press has changed it's name to Royal Fireworks. If you have members having trouble finding Trillium Press, that's why. Their address is the same, Royal Fireworks, First Avenue, PO Box 399 Unionville, NY, 10988-0399, e-mail: rfpress@frontiernet.net.

Thank you again for making room in your newsletter for such a wonderful review.

Sandra Warren
Strongville, OH

CALENDAR

CAG BOARD MEETINGS

NOVEMBER 19–21, 1999
Hyatt Islandia, San Diego

JANUARY 21–23, 2000
Hyatt Regency, Sacramento

APRIL 7–9, 2000
Fairmont Hotel, San Jose

JUNE 2–4, 1999
Doubletree Hotel, Monterey

Board Meetings are open to the public. If a meeting is scheduled in your area and you wish to attend, please call the CAG office for specific information.

38TH ANNUAL CAG CONFERENCE

MARCH 3–5, 2000
"Century of Reflections—Honoring the Past, Imagining the Future"
Century Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

NOVEMBER 3–7, 1999
National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)
"Pathways to the Millennium"
Albuquerque, New Mexico
For information, call 202-785-4268

JULY 31–AUGUST 4, 2001
14th Biennial World Conference of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children,
Barcelona, Spain
For details, call 818-368-7501.

The California Association for the Gifted serves its members in many valuable ways:

- **Institutes and conferences for educators and families**
- **Parenting strategies to nurture giftedness**
- **Advocacy to assure funds for GATE programs**
- **Publications about differentiated curriculum and contemporary issues affecting gifted students**

CAG is a mission-driven, volunteer administered, non-profit association.

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It has always been difficult for me to understand why some educators are willing to defer the identification of and services for young children who demonstrate potential for giftedness until they are older. Contemporary educational practices and research discuss the importance of early identification and services for primary age children. The old cliche "early ripe, early rot" is as outdated as the Royal Upright Standard Typewriter. Parents and educators attending to the needs of the young gifted child are significant factors in the development of potential and success in the fight against underachievement.

The issue of early childhood education for gifted students needs to be addressed in both formal and informal settings. Questions about the why and how of an early childhood gifted program need to be responded to with adequate references and supported by research data. Some issues that should be addressed by those working with educators and parents of young gifted students include the following:

- What are the reliable measures to assess gifted potential in young students?
- Does giftedness sustain itself without academic school-based support?
- Is it true or false that the primary grades are so busy teaching skills that there is no time for a differentiated curriculum? Why?
- Do gifted young learners "grow out of" giftedness?

School personnel and families of potentially gifted children have an obligation to support each child's interests and provide opportunities to stimulate that potential. Gifted young children in districts where formal identification is delayed until 3rd or 4th grade are entitled to have their abilities recognized by primary teachers; they are entitled to receive appropriate challenges in the school setting. The development of potential cannot be deferred until the child is older. The needs of gifted children do not materialize "later"; they exist in early childhood. The adults in their lives have an obligation to see that those needs are met. ■

Meet Jennifer Beaver

Our New Associate Editor for Parent Topics

With this issue we are pleased to introduce to our readers Jennifer Beaver, the latest member of the *Communicator* Editorial Board. Jennifer is replacing LaDona Hein who left the Board to focus on her new job as the GATE consultant to the California Department of Education.

Jennifer comes to us with considerable experience in the field of communication, having done editing and publishing for various non-profit and professional organizations on a volunteer basis for some time. And for the past dozen years, she has run her own company, J.E.B. Communications, which provides a variety of communication services including the writing of magazine articles, newsletters, brochures, and Web sites to develop marketing and business plans. As you can see, her professional qualifications, are outstanding.

On a personal basis, she and her husband have an eight-year-old son who has participated in the local GATE program since first grade; hence her interest in gifted education. In her application for the Editorial Board Jennifer stated, "As Associate Editor of Parent Topics, I will bring both my professional and parental experience to CAG. In dealing with gifted children and their issues, there are as many questions—more, probably—than answers. I'd love to help you examine both."

We feel privileged to have Jennifer join the Editorial Board; welcome!

FROM THE EDITOR

MARGARET GOSFIELD

Some experts suggest that the most underserved group of gifted children is that of preschool and primary grade students. For a variety of reasons, many school districts do not establish formal programs for gifted children until third or fourth grade. As a district coordinator, I'm afraid that I was as guilty as the next in underserving this group of children. With limited resources, even the process of formal identification of another segment of the school population posed a monumental task. Also, since objective test measurements of young children are less reliable than for older children, it was easier to focus on strengthening the existing program. I admired and, in fact, envied those who already had primary programs in place.

I also believe that less information is available regarding identification of and service to young gifted. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to devote an issue to this topic in order to encourage better identification and appropriate service for young gifted children.

You will find the work of Joan Franklin Smutny in many places throughout this issue, and perhaps she should be listed as a co-editor. For indeed, she not only provided a lead article and a hands-on curriculum piece, she gave me many recommendations and contacts for writers on the various issues related to service to young gifted children. Joan is the director of the Center for the Gifted at National-Louis University in Evanston, Illinois. We had many late-night phone conversations while she was in the midst of her "Summer Wonders" program for young gifted students in June and July. Many thanks to Joan for her assistance on this issue.

Joan starts us out with an article on identification of the young gifted, one of the most difficult issues facing the field. One of her recommendations is that teachers develop portfolios to document the strengths of individuals in their classes. Bertie Kingore develops the portfolio theme more fully in her article encouraging parents to assist in the identification process by providing evidence of gifted behaviors at home.

Additional articles directed especially toward parents include Elizabeth Meckstroth's thoughtful recommendations for addressing the social and emotional needs young children, and Sally Walker's article on advocating for young children at school.

Barbara Clark updates our information on brain development and provides practical recommendations for stimulating the brain from prenatal stages through the age of five, while Karen Meador share ideas for fostering creativity in young children.

Teachers have much to choose from also with Patricia Hollingsworth's description of the summer activities of the SAIL project, a federally funded Javits project which she directs in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Sandra Kaplan challenges us to see the value of play in determining resources and services for young gifted children. Elaine Wiener outlines a successful research project in her description of "Roundtable Heroes," while Joan Franklin Smutny shares suggestions on how to combine art and science using trees as the unifying theme.

We have a special feature on music this issue and you might ask why we focused on music—why not also a young mathematician or a young linguist? It was just coincidental that at the time CAG was involved in the selection and presentation of the first Nicholas Green award in California, we were also confirming Kathleen Asbo, a gifted teacher of young musicians, to discuss the importance of early musical instruction for gifted children. The opportunity to interview young violinist, Jennifer Wey, and her family seemed too good to pass up. So with Jennifer's essay on her love of music, we provide a trio of articles devoted to nurturing young musical talent.

You will also find a larger-than-usual number of book reviews this issue. That is in keeping with the belief that people have relatively few resources on their reference shelves pertaining to young gifted. The books reviewed should assist you in augmenting your collection, and we hope this issue as a whole will promote better identification and service to the young gifted children in your homes, schools, and districts. ■

Brain Development and the Importance of Early Stimulation

BY BARBARA CLARK

For many years parents and teachers have believed that gifted children were solely the result of a unique pattern of genetic programming that was determined at birth. It was thought that in some mysterious way this genetic inheritance gave the fortunate child special abilities and unusual potential. While there is no doubt that the genetic inheritance of each child provides the basis for a unique potential, the realization of that potential and the level of ability and talent that will be available to each child requires far more. Research is uncovering more knowledge about the impact of stimulation on the interaction between the environment and the genetic pattern that determines the development of each individual. It has become clear that the level and type of stimulation the infant receives is critical to the future level of ability and talent the child will possess. Within this interaction may be found the way to create giftedness.

TODDLERS (10 MONTHS–2 YEARS) This period has been established as the most decisive for intellectual development. Allowing a toddler to freely explore the environment is the single most important action to ensure

Infants vary greatly from birth in temperament, activity level, and reaction to sound, light, and touch. Such variation is now considered normal and strong preferences are already being shown at 6 weeks of age. Just what do we know about the capability of infants that can guide us in providing the most appropriate stimulation to foster optimal development for children? How early can children learn? What is appropriate for them to learn? What difference can early stimulation make? A brief look at some of the recent findings from research on child development and optimizing learning can provide a guide for parents and teachers as they try to answer these questions.

Prenatal Stimulation

A number of studies in the past decade have shown that we have previously seriously underestimated the abilities of infants. A summary of medical-scientific evidence shows that infants are highly complex and advanced even prior to birth. The sense of sight, taste, and hearing are in place long before birth and the sense of smell has already begun as gestation ends. By 6 months in the womb the fetus hears clearly and responds to the mother's speech. By 8 months the neural circuits are as advanced as those of a newborn and there are indications that memory has already begun. REM-style dreaming seems to occur while the infant is still in the womb.

During this prenatal period the support for later expressions of intelligence are enhanced or inhibited. There are many factors that influence this intellectual growth including physical factors such as nutrition and substance abuse.

One of the most important factors in support of enhanced growth seems to be the attitude and emotional health of the mother. This is considered by some researchers as the factor having the single greatest effect on the well being and future welfare of the unborn. Surrounding herself with a pleasant, low tension producing, stimulating, healthy environment may be the best way a mother can ensure her child an optimal beginning. What provides pleasure, stimulation, and low levels of tension for each mother will be different and requires some thought and planning. But when creating optimal development, the realization that this period is important and the care given to and by the mother at this time can not be overestimated. Patterns of personality and rhythms of living are established during this important and very early period of stimulation.

See EARLY STIMULATION, 42

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES TO STIMULATE BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

BY BARBARA CLARK

From birth to 10 months

- Carry baby in front pack or other soft carrier when possible. This allows caregiver to do chores and talk to baby while baby watches, listens, and naps next to heartbeat.
- Respond to the infant's activity and signals (e.g., awakening and looking); offer objects for baby to look at. This establishes feeling of inner locus of control, ability of child to affect the environment.
- Place mobiles over the crib patterned with a variety of shapes and colors. Use patterned sheets, and change the position and surrounding of the infant. These details will develop visual complexity skills, stimulate curiosity, and nourish growth of intelligence through heightened interaction with the environment.
- Change the position of the crib in the room. This increases visual stimulation.
- Play vocal games, provide a variety of sounds and speech patterns, and introduce real words by naming baby's body parts, pets, and toys. Familiar sounds are of high interest to infants. These are important pre-language experiences that build vocabulary, initiate conversation, and establish baby's preconceived control of its life.
- Encourage new games invented by the baby such as "drop toy" or "hide baby." This increases inner locus of control and motivation.
- Provide toys such as mirrors, moving and pop-up toys, and objects for stacking, dropping, throwing, and banging; play games with all parts of the baby's body; play, talk, and interact with baby during all caregiving activities and shopping trips. These experiences promote intellectual stimulation.
- Look at books and talk to baby; read to baby. These activities allow symbols of language to become familiar and are important as a source of fun and pleasure.

From 10 months to 2 years

- Make scrapbooks with the child of pictures of animals, cars, trips, and the child's interests; read books with the child; make books familiar. These are vocabulary and prereading activities.
- Play games linking action and words; read books with baby linking action and words. These experiences allow the toddler to see the need for reading words and their function.
- Provide toys and household objects for stringing, nesting, digging, pounding, screwing, and construction. Also magnets, magnetic letters, alphabet blocks, prisms, flashlights, puzzles, magnifying glasses, household tools, and on and on and on. These activities give intellectual stimulation, support later learning, and strengthen perception and problem-solving activities.
- Play games like hide & seek, treasure hunts, guessing games, matching and sorting, finger games, imitative play and on and on and on. Such games facilitate concept development, and give practice in planning and carrying out complicated projects, anticipating consequences, and developing skills of problem solving.
- Use familiar lullaby or nursery rhyme tapes at nap and bedtimes. This provides security in routine and encourages language skills.
- Include the child in your activities whenever possible: When cooking, allow the child to use bowls and utensils; when writing allow the child to write with crayons; and when painting allow the child to paint with water. These activities build self-esteem while giving the child a better understanding of your work.

From 2 years to 5 years

- Provide objects for manipulation, such as blocks, bowls, and boxes. Through touching, moving, and banging, coordination is learned and relationships can be experienced.
- Label your actions as you do them; label the child's actions as he or she does them; encourage talking while thinking. These activities facilitate the use of language for thinking and aid the development of metacognition.
- Share much of the decision making with the child by giving choice and discussing the consequences of each choice. This allows the child to become an independent thinker and good decision-maker.
- Include the child in resolving arguments and differences. This allows the child to discover strategies for resolving differences and alternatives for more unacceptable behavior to resolve arguments.
- Encourage the development of the child's intuitive insights, imagination, and intuitive skills by their use in mathematics, theory building (hypothesizing), storytelling,and writing (e.g., poetry, riddles, and fantasies). Children have considerable intuitive ability; it should be acknowledged and used.
- Provide intellectual peers with whom the child can interact and play and adults with whom they can be friends. This facilitates development of language, self-concept, and higher level thinking.

Advocating for Young Gifted Children at School

BY SALLY Y. WALKER

Becky bounded into the kindergarten class. Her enthusiasm was evident. She had waited for 5 years, or so it seemed to her parents, for this day. For the last year she had counted the days till she would go to "real" school. Pre-school and day care did not count. Here she would be able to learn, share, and do important things.

Becky's parents were also enthusiastic. Her excitement was contagious. The oldest child, Becky dominated her younger siblings. Her vocabulary was larger than her physical being. Her curiosity and questions were never-ending and rather exhausting. She loved reading and had a stockpile of books, most of which she has been reading since age 3. Her parents did not "teach" her to read; she somehow cracked the code and began to devour books. This added to her wealth of information and questions.

Soon, however, Becky's parents noticed that her enthusiasm for school had changed. Instead of being up and ready for school, she procrastinated. Some days she complained of a tummy ache or cried. School had become a place to avoid. She became quiet and withdrawn. What had happened? What should Becky's parents do? How could her attitude have changed so dramatically?

Becky's parents are not alone. Hundreds of parents with bright, precocious, gifted children face the problem of getting the school or teacher to acknowledge and support their children's strengths, while remediating weaknesses. Myths still abound that gifted children will make it on their own, that they enjoy teaching others, that they like being used as examples or that they cannot be identified until they are older, at least not until third grade.

"...the young gifted child may learn that being too smart is not too smart, and adapt to minimal classroom expectations."

Most gifted programs start in third grade, so why do anything earlier? Numerous program options can be made available prior to that time. Experts report, however, that only about 4% of gifted children actually receive the service required for their special abilities. In fact, the young gifted child may learn that being too smart is not too smart, and adapt to minimal classroom expectations. They may equate learning with "effortlessness." If this happens, the child may be denied opportunities to struggle or to process new information—both invaluable life skills. Without parental help and support, the gifted child may never reach his potential. The school's counselor, psychologist, administrator, gifted program coordinator and/or curriculum specialist may be helpful.

Parents, however, are the first line of defense when a child no longer enjoys school or is not being challenged by it. Here's how you can advocate through action while joining with the school to form a solid, productive partnership:

- **Communicate.** Share your concerns and observations. Listen to your child's teacher for clues to behavior. What is the teacher's perception? Does the teacher sense a problem? Is the teacher overwhelmed with students of diverse abilities, interests? Is there an awareness that your child has some special ability or interest?
- **Document.** Start documenting the child's work, books read, pictures of projects. Some abilities are easier to showcase, especially those in graphic or performing arts or athletics. Other talents are less visible to the casual eye, and it will be more challenging to build a portfolio.
- **Identify.** Remember that not all teachers can identify young intellectually gifted or creative children. In fact, the gifted child

may be more of a pain than a pleasure—a situation that may cause a teacher to criticize rather than embrace his talents. Have solid evidence ready that the child really is gifted and deserves special consideration.

- **Volunteer.** A teacher has lots of work and too little time. Even if you can't come into the classroom there are plenty of ways to help. Type children's dictation, record books on tape, locate resources for units of study, help to arrange speakers, trips, treats.
- **Join.** Join local, state, and national gifted organizations. Encourage your child's teacher to join, too. Provide information about the state gifted conference and encourage teacher participation at the event. Share information or articles on gifted children or teaching strategies. Form a parent group so that you can relate to others with similar concerns.
- **Smile.** Keep relations positive. Be careful not to express negative feelings about the teacher or school to the child. This serves no positive purpose.
- **Support.** Support the school where you can; many schools have gifted site councils that would welcome your participation. Send thank-you notes and be vocal in your praise when things do go well. Help inform decision-makers without alienating them. View yourself as a partner—not an enemy.
- **Advocate.** Urge challenging programs for all children. They all need accommodations to help them reach their greatest potential.
- **Parent.** Education is not the school's job alone. Once the child is in school the parents' role in education has not stopped—it has only become shared. Continue to read and talk to your child, take her places, play games with him, marvel at nature, enjoy hobbies together. Watch TV together and talk about the show.

Gifted children can be both rewarding and challenging. While they learn easily and rapidly, they are quickly bored by routine, drill, and repetition. When denied or lacking stimulation, they may make their own. Given paper, glue, string, markers, and scissors, they can create for ages.

They are well-informed, often in the most unusual areas. They are observant, alert and use all their senses. Not only do they possess a great deal of information, they retain and apply it. Their curiosity leads them to question. They are often creative, imaginative and inventive, giving unusual responses to common questions.

They like consistency and order in the world even though their own areas may be a mess. They enjoy challenges and complex ideas. They think in many different directions and generate abstract ideas. Their critical thinking aids them in making good, perceptive evaluations. Their striving for perfection goes beyond the academic as they strive for truth, justice, and social consciousness. They are sensitive and empathic towards others, and are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Their mature sense of humor helps them lighten their heavy loads—though it may be turned in anger to sarcasm.

They are not easy children to teach. They do not fit the norm or the mold, and may even aggravate the teacher.

Most of all they need parents who care and support them. Model excellence. Your actions speak loudly. ■

DR. SALLY WALKER, author of the award-winning *Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids*, is the executive director of the Illinois Association of Gifted Children. A former teacher, she works with parents and educators to recognize and program for the special needs of gifted and talented children. She can be reached

DON'T MISS THE CAG PARENT CONFERENCE!

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 7:30 am–3:00 pm

As part of it's yearly conference, CAG's Parent Conference addresses issues especially for parents. The 2000 conference begins with a keynote address to both parents and students by Myron Dembo entitled "Developing Study Habits and Strategies for Success." Then join the entire conference for brunch with Christopher Nance, NBC News meteorologist, and visit the exhibits where 100 vendors offer useful and imaginative materials appropriate for gifted children. After brunch choose two presentations from the full program, (language translation available for keynote address and selected presentations) and gather at a reception hosted by CAG's Parent Representatives. You'll meet members of your local CAG affiliates and GATE parent groups, and see a demonstration of CAG's website. Cost is $50 for members; $60 for nonmembers. Brunch is included. On-site registrations carry a $15 surcharge and brunch may not be included. Call the CAG office for a brochure.

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Portfolios: Documenting the Needs of Young Gifted Learners

BY BERTIE KINGORE

One ignored role of portfolios is self-nomination by children with exceptional learning needs. The products children develop can provide clear documentation of their readiness and potential.

Parents have the right and need to be active partners with schools in planning and supporting the education of their children. Parents of gifted children may need to be advocates who defend, support, and plead the case of their children's talents and needs. As an advocate rather than an adversary, assume the clear stance that you want what all parents want for their children: the opportunity for children to learn as much as they are ready and able to learn. All children deserve to learn at their optimum readiness level—even the gifted.

Portfolios increase the credibility of your advocacy for your gifted child by documenting the depth and complexity of your child's work. Documentation through product examples increases the likelihood that a parent's perception of the child's needs is accepted and respected. The products illustrate each gifted characteristic of the child that a parent has observed.

The use of a portfolio to substantiate a child's gifted potential is particularly needed when the child is:

- Very young and not yet recognized as advanced by adults at school.
- Advanced in one subject area and not in all.
- New to the area so the child's potential has not been demonstrated in that school.
- A student in a school where the curriculum is not differentiated for able learners.
- In an atmosphere of societal bias against exceptionally bright people.
- Part of a system where budgets are being tightened and schools want to cut programs for gifted learners.

Gifted children can and should be encouraged to learn to diplomatically present their own cases for their educational needs. However, with young children, parents have more tools with which to plead the case.

How Do Parents Begin?

- Use a pocket folder or photo album (one-inch thickness) as a portfolio container to organize a few products your child has produced. Photographs can be used to represent large or three-dimensional items.
- Keep the portfolio small. Six to ten items are probably sufficient to represent your child's talents. A small sampling of carefully selected products makes a more thoughtful presentation than a large scrapbook approach. Educators are more likely to have time to attend with interest to a sampling.
- Date each product. It is significant for authenticity and achievement-level comparisons to note when each item was completed.
- Read your school district's mission statement and definition of giftedness so you can more directly match the selections in your child's portfolio to the school's philosophical stance. For example, when your school's program serves academic giftedness in language arts, math, and science, you want to include products from your child that demonstrate advanced talents in one or more of those areas.
- Review lists and discussions of the characteristics of giftedness. Prepare brief annotations to accompany each portfolio product that explain how your child demonstrated a specific characteristic through that product.
- Describe additional exceptional behaviors frequently displayed by your child, such as independent thinking, problem solving, and questions about topics or concepts not typically asked by young children. You are in a unique position to recount to others the process as well as the products of your child's learning.
- Share written anecdotes of the child's expressed perceptions of school that suggest advanced sensitivity and unexpected points of view. Use your child's own words to describe the challenge or lack of it in learning situations. For example, children often tell adults that they are bored. What do they really mean if they say "bored"? Record what your children say about when and how they are bored at school.

Examples of Portfolio Products

Products that effectively advocate giftedness demonstrate depth, complexity, and the ability to process and

See PORTFOLIOS, 46

EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	EXPLANATION	PURPOSE
Art	Natural, creative explorations (rather than crafts)	Art reflects developmental levels and interests.
Photographs	Take a photograph of your child's math manipulatives and patterns, sculptures, models, dioramas, block constructions, science experiments, or organizational systems.	Photographs can represent three-dimensional products while using minimum storage room. They provide a record of the product when no paper product is otherwise involved.
Audio tapes	A child records oral story problems using math concepts, literature retellings, poems and stories written by the child, ideas, and problem solutions.	Audio tapes can indicate oral language development, fluency, and concept mastery.
Dictations	An adult writes a child's dictated explanation of a product or process. Adults prompt these dictations with statements such as: "Tell me about your work" and "Tell me how you did that."	Dictation increases adults' understanding of why and how children do something. It indicates oral language development, vocabulary level, fluency, and concept mastery.
Writings	A child uses lined or unlined paper and writes numerals, letter-like shapes, letters, words, sentences, stories, or poems. The accent is on the child's construction of meaning rather than exact letter formation and standard spelling.	Written products measure awareness of print concepts, emergent literacy, fine motor skills, and organization.
Reading Level	Provide one or two examples of books or printed material the child can read independently (not material the child has memorized).	All gifted children do not read advanced-level materials at an early age. However, since advanced learning opportunities often require more reading independence, educators are interested in the reading level of a child.
Graphs or charts	A child produces a graph or chart to demonstrate simple investigations. For example, a child folds a piece of paper in half and then surveys and tallies the opinions of family and neighborhood members on an issue of concern to the child. As another example, a child makes a chart by cutting and pasting on a paper words and pictures she or he has categorized in some advanced way.	Graphs or charts demonstrate specific skills or concepts applied in the task, data recording strategies, higher-level thinking, and organizational skills.
Computer products	A child uses a computer to create products. For example, a child types and prints out stories using simple computer software.	Computer-generated products indicate computer literacy, emergent literacy, and topic-related academic skills or concepts applied in the task.
Video tapes	Video tapes are wonderful ways to document performing arts and process—how a child completes a task. They are less applicable to substantiate academic skill development due to the increased equipment and time hassle necessary to show the tape. Limit tape entries to three or four minutes if they are to be reviewed by educators.	A video presents a significant visual record and celebration of skills and behaviors.

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF LIFE WITH YOUNG CREATIVE CHILDREN

BY KAREN MEADOR

There is no single snapshot of a young creative child or model to which a youngster can be compared. Yet, parents and primary and early childhood teachers describe episodes in which young children display creative thinking, and these combine to provide an interesting kaleidoscope of scenarios. This article is written for parents, however, it also provides valuable information for teachers. The scenarios help guide readers toward recognition and understanding of creative thinking in young children, and the article includes valuable suggestions for parents.

Originality

"It's a beautiful morning and day today...." Six-year-old Brandon came racing back in the house after his mom sent him out to catch the morning school bus. "Write it down, write it down," he said. "Brandon, you're going to miss the bus," cried his mother. "No," Brandon replied, "write it down before it goes away." He was singing the words and tune to an original song he composed while waiting outdoors. His mom grabbed the tape recorder, they successfully captured the song, and Brandon managed to get on the bus. Later that day, he and his mom brought the vocal treasure to his piano teacher, and Brandon refused to do anything during his lesson until the teacher wrote down every word and note. The remainder of the lesson Brandon played from the transcribed music until he knew the piece by heart and could sing along. His teacher played chords to embellish the song, and Brandon was thrilled with the results.

Brandon's new song was creative as indicated by Amabile (1989) and Parnes (1970) who describe creative behavior as that which is *novel* or *unique* and *appropriate* or *relevant*. "It's a Beautiful Morning and Day Today" bore no similarity to any other familiar music, and while Brandon had written one or two songs during his piano lessons, he had previously used a formula-driven approach to writing. The song was quite appropriate within music genre for children, and Brandon's creative thinking was demonstrated in a product that many enjoyed.

The previous scenario illustrates one of the components of creative thinking, originality, which "...results when something is created for the first time" (Meador, 1997, p. 38). Some of the other components of creative thinking including fluency, flexibility, and elaboration will also be discussed in this article. Another example of a young child's original thinking follows.

Mom stood by the door and watched as Kristen leaped off the school bus. It was their usual routine to meet outside and walk in together, and today Kristen, a first grader, was waving a large piece of paper. As the child grew closer, Mom could see that the large paper had been constructed by taping many regular-size pieces together and that these had been jaggedly cut into an oval. When the two got inside, Kristen explained that this was a design for a doll blanket and that Mom "must" make it immediately! "The problem," Kristen said, "is that the blankets won't stay on my dolls, so I've made one that will." She showed her mom how the oval blanket had a second small

"Children also need psychological space where they can play w

piece attached at the top forming a cap to cover part of the doll's head. The bottom of the blanket was designed to fold up over the doll's legs; then the sides would fold in toward the doll and velcro would hold it in place creating a neat package. Although Mom tried to explain that she would need to make the blanket later, Kristen persevered and finally they went to work. First, they tested Kristen's idea using scrap fabric and made a few adjustments to the design. Finally Mom made the new doll blanket from a soft fabric and Kristen proudly displayed it to her friends. Mom never asked what the child was supposed to have been doing in school while she was designing the blanket.

Kristen used original thinking when designing the doll blanket. Her mom indicated that the child had not previously seen either the oval shape in a blanket or the velcro at the bottom. Kristen might have piggybacked on the idea of her own hooded bath towel used when she was a baby to create the cap for her doll blanket.

Fluency

As Kristen grew older, she displayed her creativity in countless other ways including elaborate hatmaking, a project that lasted several months. On her own, she figured out how to use various sizes of paper bowls to create small hats. She produced a large number of hats, adorned with ribbons, fabric, feathers, buttons, and other items, and each hat had an entirely different look. As her skill increased, she began to take liberties with the basic structure of the hats such as cutting away the rounded portion of the bowl leaving only the rim or putting two rims together. Kristen's fluency, "...the ability to produce a quantity of ideas, answers, or problem solutions" (Meador, 1997,p. 1), in hat production contributed to her becoming an expert at the task, and this led to more original and unusual products.

Elaboration

A first-grade teacher's directive asking students to draw where they lived also resulted in a creative product. Most students completed the task in less than 15 minutes, yet, Mario wanted to continue his work during recess. Although he worked diligently, he still did not finish before the class returned. Eventually, Mario asked and was allowed to take the drawing home, and he returned it following completion. It was easy to see why he needed extra time. Mario represented his home, a red brick structure, in grand detail. Each brick was drawn separately as were the shingles on the roof. Additionally, Mario included the shrubs around the house and the sidewalk leading to the front door. This depiction varied greatly from those produced by his peers due to Mario's elaboration, a concept defined in Webster's 1995 dictionary as the result of something "planned or done with careful attention to numerous details or parts." Mario's drawing was an indication of his skill in creative elaboration and the detail with which he viewed the world at a young age. Mario continued to display creative thinking, and in fifth grade he wrote an elaborate 15-page short story that intrigued his classmates, teachers, and others.

Some of the previous examples describe creative products in the arts, and perhaps the most obviously beautiful essence of creativity is captured in artistic forms. Yet, we must not narrow our definition to this domain. Engineers, doctors, machinists, plumbers, and others all use creative thinking at one time or another especially when facing a new dilemma or problem.

Creative thinking is a necessary component of problem solving and is described by Torrance as "the process of forming ideas or hypotheses, testing hypothesis, and communicating the results" (1995, p. 23). Problems encountered by adults may include things such as how to manage a formal dinner for a large number of people in a small house and how to entertain small children in the dark when the electricity has gone out and they are frightened. While we may readily recognize these situations as problems, those faced by children, viewed from an adult perspective, may not seem like problems at all.

See KALEIDOSCOPE, 44

ve thoughts without fear of being laughed at or reprimanded."

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Note This resource lists for parents was prepared by Joan Franklin Smutny.

The Role of Play in a Differentiated Curriculum for Young Gifted Students

BY SANDRA KAPLAN

The value and relevance of play in the educational life of young gifted students is often at the center of the controversy of developing and selecting educational experiences for young gifted children. Some educators and parents believe that play is too unsophisticated for young gifted students and inhibits or deters intellectual growth. Advanced and academically rigorous learning is perceived to parallel instructional materials that are more authentic or aligned to the disciplines. It is assumed that a compass and an atlas provide greater value to learn map skills than a set of blocks and toy cars and trucks. While this is a typical response to items of play as instructional materials, it is important to recognize that materials used for play can support academic challenges in the core or basic curriculum as well as differentiated curricular experiences.

The intellectual abilities of young gifted students are often used as the determining factor in choosing appropriate activities and materials for these children. Young gifted children reading several years above grade/age level assignments are believed to be too mature to be interested in the traditional literary selections for children their chronological age. The variance between mental and chronological ages often associated with young gifted children creates dissonance in defining what is developmentally appropriate for them.

The basic question is whether educators and parents should choose educational experiences that support the mental or chronological ages of young gifted children. The answer is not to minister to one dimension of the young gifted child over another, but rather to respond to both the mental and chronological needs of these children.

First-grader Jeffery, a student in Patricia Hollingworth's Project SAIL program (see p. 16), illustrates the value of play in his castle design.

Play as a Stimulus to a Differentiated Learning Experience

Mandy is a young gifted student who excels in the areas of science and math. She is attracted to the Dress-Up Learning Center in the multiage, primary classroom to which she is assigned. Her current interests span dressing up to play "the queen" and asking questions about chemical reactions and infinity. While she is playing at the Dress-Up Learning Center, the teacher conferences with Mandy, asking her about the outfit she is wearing: Who are you dressed-up to be? What are you wearing? Why did you choose these particular garments to portray the role you are assuming? The teacher questions about the garments Mandy is wearing evoke another related question: What types of fabrics are used to create these garments? The discussion of synthetic versus natural fabrics stimulates Mandy's inquiry into the role of chemistry in fabric and clothing.

Roberto is actively laying out blocks to form a freeway like the one he travels on to get to his elementary school. The first-grader is so busy constructing the freeway that he is oblivious to the teacher's request to come to the reading table for the day's guided reading lesson.

Roberto's teacher goes over to the student and decides that the intricate freeway he has constructed will be the basis for an independent study. Four questions are defined for Roberto to explore, each of which is related to a discipline-defined math, language arts, or social studies standard. Recognizing Roberto's superior academic prowess in reading, the teacher replaces teacher-directed reading time with self-directed independent study experiences, incorporating reading across different content areas.

The use of play as a stimulus to academic challenges accomplishes several goals necessary for gifted students. First, the use of play allows gifted students the enjoyment of being a child while simultaneously pursuing the academic rigor of which a young gifted child is capable. Second, the natural inclination for children to play is used as a positive rather than negative attribute for intellectual development, thus preventing children (and educators) from making an arbitrary selection between play or academic endeavors. Third, when play is used to define learning opportunities, motivation and the potential for academic success are heightened.

Play as a Follow-Up to Academic Challenges

Sam has just finished completing his report on inventors and inventions.

See PLAY, 49

Young Children SAIL Far

A Javits Project to Develop Gifts and Talents of Economically Disadvantaged Students

BY PATRICIA L. HOLLINGSWORTH

Van, car, and bus loads of students arrived on the campus of The University of Tulsa. Everyone was looking for a parking spot. But these were not college students—these were students from kindergarten through high school on campus for Project SAIL.

Project SAIL is a three-year US Department of Education Javits grant to identify and develop gifts and talents in economically disadvantaged students. The content and methods are based on those used for many years at University School at The University of Tulsa, a school for gifted children.

The focus of the Javits program is active interdisciplinary learning. The SAIL acronym stands for Students' Active Interdisciplinary Learning. The content is the interdisciplinary study of historical time periods from ancient Egyptian to early modern. The purpose of this study was for students to be aware of recurring historical patterns represented by the art and architecture of the time and to be able to recognize antecedents in our own time. Even very young children can understand advanced and complex themes when they are taught with an active interdisciplinary approach. And while students K-12 participated in the project, this article will focus on activities related to primary-age students.

Advanced and complex curricular materials may not be developmentally appropriate for all children. However, they may be developmentally appropriate for gifted children if they are taught in age-appropriate ways such as active learning. Active learning includes the learner in the process. Active learning is dynamic and engaging. Many advanced ideas and concepts can be taught to young students if done in an engaging, active, and novel way.

Michelle Peeples, a Project SAIL participating teacher who teaches first grade, wrote: "My first impression of this program was, 'How are they going to teach first graders facts about history I hadn't learned until late high school and through college?' To my amazement, the students have not only learned facts about history but they can see some of the influences on us today. I believe the teaching style of this program is incredibly innovative."

Each day for three weeks, students participated in classes in art, writing, drama, math, and research, all of which focused on a particular time period. University School teachers led the classes and modeled the teaching strategies. Participating teachers and parents observed, helped with individual instruction, and later took turns employing the strategies with the students.

Debbi Cook, a second-grade participating teacher from Tulsa, wrote: "Integrating the curriculum makes content more interesting. Using art not only makes learning more fun for children, but addresses a learning style not tapped in the traditional classroom. Drama accomplishes this also, plus provides a vehicle for displaying to others what the students have learned.

Art

The children had art with a teacher in "period" costume who discussed the values, architecture, and art of

RESEARCH CENTERS were based on historical time periods from ancient Egyptian to early modern. In addition to books and pictures, the centers were filled with manipulatives and hands-on objects—blocks, mummies to wrap, models, and dress-up clothes. A kindergartner gets outfitted with a suit of armor at the Medieval Center and first-graders "explore" a Victorian home.

the time period being studied. For example, during the study of the Romans, a toga-clad Augustus Caesar explained the virtues of the Roman Empire by having the students draw the Pantheon. During the Baroque study, the wife of Peter Paul Rubens discussed life and homes of royalty and Ruben's painting of *Daniel and the Lions' Den*. During the Romantic period, Edgar Allan Poe and Annabel Lee visited. The explanations and the drawings were woven together so that the students were active and involved as they learned.

Each day, the students, teachers, and parents did a group chant with movements that kinesthetically recalled all the time periods from Egyptian to modern. Additionally, each classroom had large posters depicting simplified versions of each time period studied. These posters and the chant were used to reinforce the concepts taught. Games were played with the posters such as arranging the posters in chronological order and identifying the time period.

Research

The research centers for the kindergarten, first, and second graders had topics such as the Classical Period, the Middles Ages, the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Neoclassical, and Romanticism. These were unusual topics for young children and certainly unusual for young economically disadvantaged children. At least that is what the participating elementary teachers thought at first.

Children came to the research centers in small groups. Each group had a paper with three large interlocking rings on it. In one ring was the name of the time period and the values of the period which had been introduced at various other centers such as drama, art, and writing. The topic heading for the second circle was "Daily Life" and for the third "Arts." The children used books, displays, and hands-on objects, such as architecture blocks, to draw or write about the topics.

At the Egyptian Center there were mummies to wrap, canopic jars to fill, pyramids in the sand, as well as an array of books. The Classical Center had architecture blocks, a keystone arch, and a three-foot model of the Parthenon. The Medieval had a castle, plastic armor to wear, and plastic blocks to create stained glass windows. The Baroque palace, made from plastic modular blocks, was large enough for several children to play inside.

Once children had visited the centers and completed the 3-ring worksheet, they were free to choose to continue to read, write, or play with the center materials. On the Egyptian bulletin board some children drew pictures of pyramids and pharaohs, others wrote a few words about Egypt, and others wrote sentences. "Egypt is mostly desert." "They had chambers for the dead people." This extra time allowed children to explore the topic in their own favorite learning mode.

Music During Research Classes

During the Medieval study Gregorian chants were played. The children dramatized being stiff sculptures from the Middle Ages while they sang their own versions of chants. At another time Renaissance music was played as students danced around a maypole. Bach was played for the Baroque period, Mozart for the Neoclassical, and Berlioz for the Romantic.

Near the end of the three-week program participating teacher Ruby Duckett wrote: "Project SAIL has a unique approach to teaching. At first I was apprehensive about teaching small children about ancient history and architecture. But now it seems as natural as learning the alphabet."

Writing

"Smooth," "cool," "refreshing," the kindergartners called out as they described the lotion on their hands. They were discussing how Egyptians had used lotions to keep skin soft. The words were written on the board as the students said them. Students who were able to write some of the words did so in their journals, others wrote short sentences. The writing was interactive, open-ended, and a natural extension of discussion.

FOCUSING ON INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING, art, music, drama, research, math, and writing activities were integrated into each content area. A second-grade queen conducts a tour of the Louvre, displaying student art projects originating from the study of various historical periods.

In writing class, these young students often used productive thinking to describe objects related to the time periods. One day they described the Parthenon using many, varied, single words. Next they used those words to create analogies.

The students looked at pictures of the Parthenon and discussed the importance of balance to the Greeks. The students stood in a balanced and then in an unbalanced way. Next they orally completed the following analogy:"The Parthenon columns are as balanced as _____." Answers included mini-blinds, butterfly wings, a boat. These were all written on the board for students to select and write in

See PROJECT SAIL, 48

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE YOUNG GIFTED CHILD:
Potential and Promise, an Anthology
Edited by Joan Franklin Smutny
(1998)
Hampton Press Inc.,
paperback, $35.00, 582 pp.
ISBN: 1-57273-109-5

REVIEWED BY MARGARET GOSFIELD

Joan Franklin Smutny's anthology on young gifted children has to be the most comprehensive publication of its kind. Moreover, a list of the authors of its 41 chapters reads like a "Who's Who" in young gifted education. From the opening article by Barbara Clark, "The Beginnings of Giftedness," to Sally Walker's "Successful Parenting," to Joan Vydra and Judy Leimbach's "Planning Curriculum for Young Gifted Children," to the final chapter on "Technology-Based Instruction for Young Gifted Children" by Sandra Berger and Jay McIntire, the book covers the broad range of questions and issues related to young gifted children at home and at school. As a resource on young gifted children, this is a book you will return to again and again.

The book is divided into typical sections including:

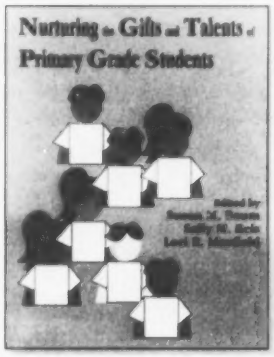
- Identification: Creative Strategies and Techniques (6 articles)
- Special Populations: Challenges and Opportunities (9 articles)
- Parenting the Gifted Child: Enabling and Encouraging Parents (6 articles)
- Meeting Social and Emotional Needs to Effect Growth (6 articles)
- Creating Effective Educational Experiences for Gifted Young Children (14 articles)

In their chapter on planning curriculum for young gifted students, Vydra and Leimbach remind us that often everything "comes easy" for children in preprimary and primary classrooms. Such children do not experience the important lessons of perseverance or the pleasure of accomplishing a challenging task. These children are being cheated in their school experience. Vydra and Leimback recommend educators consider compacting, pacing, acceleration, enrichment, and creative-thinking activities that are specially selected to challenge and excite young gifted children.

I found one of my favorite chapters in the parent section, but, it was in fact directed toward teachers. Gina Ginsberg Riggs' article, "Parents of Gifted Children: Sheep in Wolves' Clothing?" should be mandatory reading for all teachers of gifted students—and parents too. In a lighthearted but serious manner, Ginsberg Riggs illustrates ways for teachers to make supporters out of parents who might otherwise be yearlong banes of their existence.

Joan Franklin Smutny's opening perspectives are remarkably well done as are her introductions to each section; and her choices of writers and topics are outstanding. This book should be in the library of every parent and educator working with young gifted children. ■

NURTURING THE GIFTS
AND TALENTS OF
PRIMARY GRADE STUDENTS
Edited by Susan M. Baum, Sally M. Reis,
Lori R. Maxfield
(1998)
Creative Learning Press, Inc.
paperback, $32.95, 370 pp.
ISBN 0-936386-71-1
www.neca.com/~clp



REVIEWED BY KRISTEN WORDEN

Have you been looking for more information on teaching the primary gifted child? In most schools, the primary gifted child "doesn't exist" because of problems with identification and beliefs about giftedness that apply only to older elementary students. This book tries to redefine giftedness and bring us past traditional thinking. According to many of the contributing authors, we should be looking at the whole child during the identification process, including not only the traditional test scores or IQ but also looking at the commitment level, creativity, interests, and learning styles of the child.

The book is actually a compilation of a variety of articles geared specifically toward the education of young children. This format makes it easy to read as well as easy to refer back to for specific information. It is divided into four main parts:

1. Identifying gifts, interests and learning styles
2. Program and curricular models for talent development

3. Curricular ideas and strategies
4. Putting it all together—classroom management.

Although it is primarily written for teachers and administrators of gifted programs, many of the articles can be beneficial to parents of young advanced children as well.

The beginning section of the book describes the different learning styles and how they are important to the education of all children. It discusses what to look for in planning your identification process for young gifted children. One of the articles in the second section discusses exemplary models of gifted programs from across the nation. These were very interesting to read and provided high standards to compare my own program to as well. Many special programs are described to assist in the development of a gifted program for the young learner.

In addition to the curricular ideas and strategies, many examples of portfolios and planning ideas are given. I found several terrific bibliographies to add developmentally appropriate resources to my advanced curriculum. The articles also discuss the benefits of curriculum compacting and allowing student interests to help drive your teaching. The management section gives several ideas for including the advanced child in the heterogeneous classroom setting.

I think one of the authors said it best, "Teachers must take charge of the curriculum rather than passively following guides and programs." This book gives guidance to the teachers of primary gifted children and helps them take charge of that curriculum. ■

KRISTEN WORDEN lives in Pasadena, CA and teaches at the Euclid Gifted/High Ability Magnet in East Los Angeles, which is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

THE GIFTED KIDS' SURVIVAL GUIDE: For Ages 10 & Under
By Judy Galbraith
(1999)
Free Spirit Publishing
paperback, $9.95, 97 pp.
ISBN 1-57542-053-8
www.freespirit.com

This classic guide for gifted children has been revised and updated and should be a top-of-the-list item for anyone parenting or teaching a young gifted child. However, it should be on your list simply because you are the one who needs to put it into the hands of your special child. The book itself is written specifically to and for kids.

Galbraith surveyed hundreds of youngsters to learn more about their feelings about, and responses to being gifted to add to her already extensive background of information. She then wrote a book that engages young readers in language that is always lively, clear, and to the point.

She immediately gets young readers involved with a "Quick Quiz" to determine whether or not this book is for them. And she invites responses throughout by providing space for kids to add their own ideas and thoughts to that of the author and other kids. For example, early in the book she lists the "8 Great Gripes of Gifted Kids."

1. We miss out on some classes and activities other kids get to do.
2. We have to do extra work in school.
3. We get teased for being smart.
4. Other kids ask us for too much help.
5. The stuff we do in school is too easy and it's boring.
6. When we finish our schoolwork early, we often can't work ahead.
7. Our friends and classmates don't always understand us.
8. Parents, teachers, and even our friends expect too much of us. We're supposed to get A's and do our best all the time.

Then she asks her young readers if they have gripes not listed, and provides lines to add their own. And of course, she addresses the various gripes and what kids might do about them.

Topics include discussions regarding the nature of giftedness, good and bad things about G/T (gifted and talented) programs, and great ways to turn on the brain. Also included:

- Last resort: 12 things GTs do when they're bored silly in school
- 10 ways to make school more cool
- What if your teacher says No?
- How to cope with teasing
- On friends and friendships
- The perfection infection (and cure)

—and more.

Galbraith's final words to her young readers:
It's not easy being G.T. But I hope this book has made it a little easier for you. You know now that (1) you're not alone, (2) you have rights, and (3) you can stick up for your rights. I hope you'll be free to be all you can be…and have fun along the way. ■

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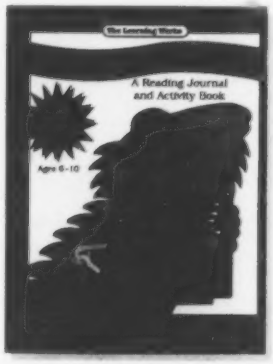
GREAT BOOKS I HAVE READ:
A Reading Journal and Activity Book
Written and Illustrated by
Bev Armstrong
Reading List by Jody Fickes Shapiro
(1998)
Learning Works
paperback, $8.95, 48 pp.
ISBN:0-88160-287-6

REVIEWED BY LINDA BRUG

If you have been looking for a book that motivates children to read, pick up this inviting journal and activity book. Designed for children ages 6-10, this book greets its reader with large appealing illustrations on each page. The book is divided into 20 different sections with each section displaying a short list of books in a certain category. The list consists of current favorites and classics followed by a brief synopsis of, or comment about each story.

The unique format gives the reader a place to list the books read in that category and a collection of stickers at the back to place next to those completed. In addition there is a puzzle or other activity to complete for each section. I especially appreciate the variety of subjects and authors included since young readers will be introduced to memorable stories and distinct authors.

There are opportunities to read science books, humor, or historical fiction. Classics and award winning books are listed as separate categories with books such as *My Father's Dragon, The Book of Three,* and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* included on the reference list.



If a young reader were to complete this journal, their reading foundation would be complete. As readers complete their books the author challenges them to extend their reading experiences. At the back of the book there is an offering of activities such as constructing puppets of their favorite characters and inventing a new cover for their book. Finally, a batch of bookmarks is included for readers to color and cut.

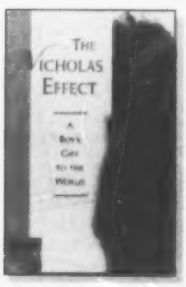
There are many books out on the market that list books for children but this one is different. It is designed to motivate and guide the reader to different reading experiences. With this attractive format children can reward themselves by recording their own reading. Children will enjoy the format and adults can use these lists to expand their own reading or read aloud to their children.

And as a bonus, *Great Books I Have Read* will become a special record of reading to keep and share with family and friends. ■

LINDA BRUG teaches Advanced Placement and honors history classes at Ventura High School in Ventura, CA. She is also the CAG Educator Representative from the Pacific Region and the Co-President of the Tri-County GATE Council.

THE NICHOLAS EFFECT: A Boy's Gift to the World
By Reg Green
(1999)
O'Reilly & Associates
hardcover, $24.95, 246 pp.
ISBN 1-56592-597-1

REVIEWED BY MARGARET GOSFIELD



Seven-year-old Nicholas Green was a clever young gifted child, full of energy, enthusiasm, and imagination; he had so much to look forward to while vacationing with his family in Italy on that fateful night in 1994. The family had planned the trip for months and checked out library books by the armload—books about Italy, ancient history, and mythology. Nicholas couldn't get enough! He was in his element upon their arrival in Rome and delighted his parents during a visit to a fine Greek temple by

Previously Reviewed

Teaching Young Gifted Children in the Regular Classroom: Identifying, Nurturing, and Challenging Ages 4–9 (1997). Authored by Joan Franklin Smutny, Sally Yahnke Walker & Elizabeth Meckstroth, this 230-page book is available in paperback for $8.95. Free Spirit Publishing, ISBN:1-57542-017-1

You'll find a review in the Fall 1998 *Communicator*, Vol. 19, No. 4.

announcing inside that he was the god Zeus, and then running out onto Italian soil and proclaiming that he was now Jupiter. The lessons of the dual Greek and Roman gods and the many library books had not been lost on him.

Almost within the next moment, however, his name was in headlines around the world. The story of the drive-by shooting by robbers mistaking the Greens for a car they thought was carrying jewels, the death of Nicholas, and his parents' decision to donate his organs to Italians in need, touched millions of hearts—in Italy, in America, and countless places everywhere.

The Nicholas Effect is not the typical book reviewed in a journal for the education of gifted children. It has no tips on parenting, and no effective teaching strategies. It is instead, a father's story of his young gifted child whose life was cut tragically short, and the family's response to this event as well as the response of the world to their actions.

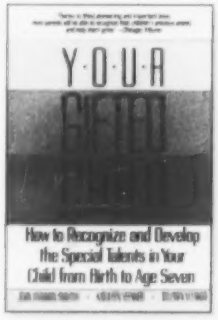
The seven individuals who received organs from Nicholas were given new life; their families gained new hope. But the total effect of the action was multiplied many times as people in Italy and elsewhere heard the story and joined the Greens in their efforts to strengthen the organ donor program.

According to the Greens, "Nicholas' story increased awareness of the shortage of organ donors around the world, and we are gratified by that. But to us, he was not a collection of organs, but a bright, gifted, and imaginative little boy." And for that reason, they established the Nicholas Green Distinguished Student award of which Jennifer Wey was the first California recipient (see article on page 29).

Told by a loving father who is also a talented writer, the story is powerful, moving, and inspirational; it also prompted me to attach my organ donor patch to my driver's license without further procrastination. ■

YOUR GIFTED CHILD:
How to Recognize and Develop the Special Talents in Your Child from Birth to Age Seven
By Joan Franklin Smutny, Kathleen Veenker, & Stephen Veenker
(1991) Ballantine Books
paperback, $10.00, 212 pp.
ISBN: 0-345-36830-4

REVIEWED BY MARILYN MORRISON



My child is dismantling all the small appliances in our house to see how they work—what should I do?" "My three-year-old son can already read—where can I send him to nursery school?" "My daughter hates kindergarten because it's too easy—what should I say to her teacher?" Questions like these, from desperate parents of young gifted children, are the ones I hear most often as a regional parent representative for CAG. The job of developing and nurturing a child's potential giftedness falls first on the parents, and many feel unprepared, especially if this is their first child. A book such as *Your Gifted Child: How to Recognize and Develop the Special Talents in Your Child from Birth to Age Seven* is a wonderful resource for these early years, and serves as an excellent primer on gifted education.

The book is not a guide to creating "superbabies." Instead, it encourages parents to expose their children to many different experiences, both academic and nonacademic. Indeed, the authors suggest that "curiosity is the key element in the emerging toddler" and that giving infants every opportunity to learn from their curiosity is the most important thing parents can do to develop their children's intelligence.

Creativity, problem-solving skills, and the importance of play are emphasized throughout the book, as is the significance of reading to children, beginning in infancy. The authors offer specific ideas for drawing children into the experience of reading and using books as a springboard to higher-level thinking. Other suggestions are made for developing preschoolers' skills in math, science, art, music, and social studies, and parents are wisely encouraged to "keep your options open for all your child's potential. Don't specialize too early."

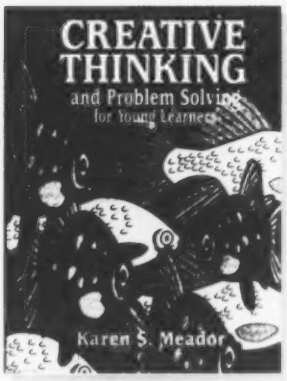
Your Gifted Child contains many helpful lists of traits and behaviors commonly observed in gifted children, and provides an introduction to many of the top names and theories in gifted research. Parents are also shown the steps to becoming advocates for gifted education, including excellent tips on talking to their child's teacher, organizing a parent advocacy group, and testifying before the school board.

Although it was written almost 10 years ago, *Your Gifted Child* still accomplishes its goal of arming parents with an understanding of the basic elements and jargon of gifted education, and offering them concrete ideas for everyday activities with their children. There are, however, many new resources on giftedness available today, notably through the Internet, and the book seems dated in its lack of current listings. A revision would certainly be welcome, but *Your Gifted Child* continues to be a concise, insightful guide for parents seeking practical answers to their questions about the challenge of raising a young gifted child. ■

MARILYN C. MORRISON lives in Van Nuys, CA and is the CAG Parent Representative for the Mission Region.

CREATIVE THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS
By Karen S. Meador, Illustrated by Christopher M. Herren
(1997) Teacher Ideas Press
paperback, $21.50, 155 pp.
ISBN 1-56308-529-1

REVIEWED BY MARTHA HIGHFILL



Yes, creativity can be taught! This book shows how to nurture creativity and problem- solving abilities with your students, children, and grandchildren, using fluency, flexibility, and originality. While presented to grades K-4, it goes even further and gives clear examples of ways to adapt lessons for older and younger children. This book is an excellent resource that includes complete cross-curricular lesson plans, including complete lists of related literature.

"We must start by caring about their creativity, nurture their thinking, and help them become all that is possible." E. Paul Torrance (1979) explains that fluency is the ability to produce and consider many alternatives. We can encourage children to be fluent by asking divergent questions for which there are no clear-cut answers or limitations to response types. Meador explains that this encourages children to participate without the fear of being wrong.

The ability to be fluent is important because it magnifies the range of possibilities for creativity. A sample question is, "How many ways can a ruler be used?" I have used the guidelines for encouraging fluency in class as well as sharing ideas with parents to use at home. I encourage parents to ask open-ended questions as they read with their children each night. For example, after reading "Little Miss Muffet," encourage children to brainstorm a list of other insects that could have sat next to Little Miss Muffet. Next, list words that rhyme with the insects that they choose. Narrow it down to one and then write a new rhyme. This turns reading time into a fluent, fun activity. In class the next day they can act out or share their new rhyme! Meador gives many examples of ways to encourage fluency using nursery rhymes, math, science, and social studies.

Davis and Rimm define flexibility as "the ability to take different approaches to a problem, think of ideas in different categories, or view a situation from several perspectives" (1994, p. 189).

Meador explains that flexibility moves thought patterns out of natural ruts. "Who?" " what?" "when?" and "where?" questions stimulate flexible thinking by suggesting individuals consider specific sides of an issue. Flexibility is highly necessary for creative thinking and for life. An enjoyable lesson in flexibility is to give a variety of objects to small groups of students and have them come up with alternative uses for the items. Examples given are coffee mugs, shoes, and clipboards. This activity can easily be adjusted for different age groups by your selection of items. Children have a great time with this activity and it encourages not only flexibility but also fluency!

"Originality results when something is created for the first time." Meador reminds us to look at creations from the child's point of view. If it is the first time the child has produced an idea, then it is original, although we may have seen it somewhere else before. This reminder has changed the way I view all of my students' work. Again, related literature examples are listed as well as complete lesson plans.

Meador continues to elaborate on ways we can teach and encourage children to become creative. I found this book to be a useful resource which has techniques that are exciting and can be easily used immediately. "Creative people generate sparks that ignite not only their own ideas but also those of others." Let's all "seize opportunities to build a fire."

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RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

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Note: This resource lists for teachers was prepared by Joan Franklin Smutny.

Roundtable Heroes

Serious Research for Primary Grades

BY ELAINE S. WIENER

A teacher's fantasy of a great lesson is as glorious as any Hollywood production. Such fantasies, obviously, are built in the mind. They are ideal lessons which always work. When they are implemented and the parts fit together—when the fantasy is actualized—it is a "high" which lives in one's memory. I've always thought that a teacher's résumé should list fantasy lessons which come true!

An ideal lesson is a lesson which teaches important facts. An ideal lesson has concepts which propel students into a depth of learning which then transfer to other subjects and situations. An ideal lesson provides values which are derived from the content so naturally that lecturing or moralizing isn't necessary. And the ideal lesson has a hands-on component which weaves all the learning together, internalizes it, and motivates children to listen, study, learn—and love it while they do it.

The closest I have ever come to my fantasy of that ideal lesson is a research unit where the children study famous historical figures. The culminating activity finds them dressed like their hero or heroine, sitting around a formally set round table, and portraying their famous personages as they properly eat and drink. This activity is the highlight of the year because there are several specific, sequential processes leading to the end result. The tightly woven fabric of this unit is responsible for the success of its end.

The accompanying activities are part of my regular CORE or GATE curricula, but with the Roundtable as the end goal. At any point, according to a teacher's style, parent help could be integrated. Because this fantasy evolved over many years, I find it easier to do this myself. Each detail of the final production is so essential to the overall effect, that having total control seems easier to me than conducting a cadre of people helpers.

However, I have seen colleagues orchestrate parent help with such finesse that I know it could be done by those with such talent. Before teaching the basics of research, it is very important to impress upon children that research is something they've waited for all their lives. At Back-to-School Night, parents are told that research is the one piece of curriculum which ties in all subjects. It is a curriculum which will be used throughout their children's lives—in college and beyond.

This is a very good time to present an overview of all the research for the year, including the Roundtable at the end of the year. Providing this information in print, without exact dates is handy, but will need to be reissued a month before the Roundtable with exact dates. It is also vital to describe the costumes in a very candid manner. Some parents make very elaborate costumes. George Washington can look authentic from head to toe, but George Washington can also look spectacular with just a hat and an historical "attitude." The reality of life is that sometimes a child has more or less "opportunity" than other children. But if the objective is clear and manners prevail, each child can make do with what is available. Other parents and the teacher also help the child who has little help at home. Never has any child been deprived. Each child always looks so genuine or authentic or aristocratic or homespun—as though he or she simply walked out of history into our lives. This is also just the right time to invite parents to the event—when they are caught up in the description.

The research unit is a very specific how-to unit used in Garden Grove's District GATE program for nearly 40 years . It teaches note taking in a sequential manner so that young children are guided through this

process until they can master each step on their own. There are repeated practice activities, each one having less teacher direction. Once children are independent researchers, they still practice this art with small reports and one full animal report. Biography research is the last research project of the year. By this time, even the first-grade children read well enough to participate.

GATE children usually read far beyond their grade level. With this fact in mind, teaching this unit to first, second, and third graders is not unusual. Focus on the fact that the reading level will be from second grade to sixth grade, if not higher. Since the heroes for the Roundtable are limited to historical figures not living, reading other biographies during the year is allowed. When a child asks for a hero who is not permitted for the Roundtable event, the student is encouraged to simply "read" that book. Research is a laborious task. Not all books need to be part of a research project.

Early in the year, when most first graders cannot yet read well enough, material can be read to them by the teacher in a reading group setting, or by a parent, or by a tape. The step-by-step process of the formal research unit can be taught orally. However, GATE children learn to read so quickly, this is often not needed. In a 1-2-3 combination, the older children carry the younger children along.

Censorship is an issue not usually dealt with in the early grades. Aside from research "skills" and historical facts, the main objective of this unit is the group of traits gleaned from the reading which, hopefully, will be emulated. Therefore, many historical figures are not made available. There are many years to come where full choice occurs.

ELAINE WIENER teaches self-contained GATE classes of 1st, 2nd, & 3rd graders (sometimes combined) at Allen Elementary School in the Garden Grove School District. She may be reached at Allen School: 714-663-6228.

ROUNDTABLE HEROES

LESSON PLANS

Introducing Students to Research

Before teaching children how to research, which includes taking notes, a sign is put up every day stating how many more days before the unit begins. On that day, children dress like scholars—seriously and formally. They wear their best clothes: dresses, ties and jackets. A big speech about attitude being more important than clothes protects the child who "looks" like a scholar without any special attire. They search and RE-search for candy around the room because learning research should be a delicious adventure. It also introduces the definition of the word "RE-search," meaning searching over and over and over, which is what true investigating does.

Collecting Biographies for Research

Biographies are collected in several ways. After 34 years I own many, but for years I checked out dozens from large libraries. Children can also go to their local library. Each child needs 3 biographies about the same hero, in the simplest format they can find. That means larger print when possible. A fair amount of time is spent thinking about which hero to pick. Homework is assigned to talk about it at home. Browsing in the school library is done. The teacher can describe various lives in little mini stories. Choosing is not a shallow task.

Aladdin paperback books published by MacMillan has a series with larger print called "Childhood of Famous Americans." These books can be purchased, but the same series exists in old hardbacks in libraries. Of course there are many other biographies not quite as easily read. Two goals can simultaneously be reached with these biographies: traits which model values and a knowledge of American heroes. Founding Fathers, presidents, social reformers, scientists, and inventors have been the favorites. Heroes who are well known for their myths become real people. Less well-known heroes who are deserving are elevated to a more appropriate place of honor.

Reading and Writing

As the research about the children's heroes is being done at school, the teacher walks around helping, watching, and collect ing a class list of traits from their reading. If the child shares a piece of the story, ask him to tell you what this shows about the hero. The child will derive traits such as honesty, courage, perseverance. If necessary, you can upgrade the child's vocabulary with a

thesaurus or by simply asking for a synonym. It is very exciting to see the children use those traits when talking about their heroes. Break into many "small groups" to briefly and casually talk about the heroes along the way to cut the tedium of writing. The research reading, writing, and small chat groups time is limited to 45–60 minutes daily, but every class begs for longer time. This whole writing process should take one or two months depending upon the amount of interruptions. I use my Social Studies time, although it certainly falls into reading and writing categories as well.

Completing the Report

When the report is finished with all its proper parts—title page, table of contents, text, and bibliography—a cover is created and laminated. The hero's report now is read over and over, only by the owner, until the child feels like he or she is that hero. *No one is allowed to read another's report because it is top secret*

Practicing to be Heroes

For two weeks we practice marching to Clarke's *Trumpet Voluntary*, from our room to a grassy area with trees. Trumpet concerti or voluntaries seem to have the most regal sounds, and Clarke's *Voluntary* is my favorite. Walking straight with heads up like royalty is not automatic. Very few children are born with that sense of regal entitlement. It has to be taught. Walking straight and veering off in a synchronized rhythm to four different tables also has to be practiced. In addition, it is no easy feat to rehearse sitting down at a round table, one child at a time in rotation.

Essential Questions to Prepare

During the two weeks that we are practicing, a set of questions and the report are sent home for homework after discussing them at school. These are the main questions they will discuss and answer at the round tables. They need to memorize answers at home. Children think they know these answers, but they must practice speaking them out loud or answers fail to come out of the mouth. When a child can't find an answer from his report or his mind, quick extra research usually discovers it. The encyclopedia often is the solution, and I do this research with the child at school. It rarely is needed.

1. Who are you, and what is your claim to fame?
2. Tell us about your family in your childhood.
3. Did you have any heartaches in your childhood? (I've seen the adults tear up at the answers to this question.)
4. Describe a normal working day in your life.
5. Were there distinct patterns in your habits or behavior in your life?
6. Did you have any heartaches in your adult life? (Another tear jerker.)
7. What roadblocks did you face, and how did you overcome them?
8. Did your point of view ever conflict with other points of view?
9. Who was the greatest influence in your life?
10. If you could change anything in your life, what would it be? (Difficult)
11. Do you have some words of wisdom for the young person who brought you back?(During the original research, the encyclopedia is used especially for this question.)
12. Other questions evolve naturally along the way, according to the skill of the adult. (Questions 5 and 8 come from differentiated lessons all year.)

The Big Day Arrives

On the day of the event, round tables for eight children and one adult are set as elegantly as possible with linen table cloths, flowers, matching paper plates and cups, and place cards. Each plate has a clear plastic cup which holds M & M's, peanuts, and other goodies which don't squish or melt. The drink is to insure that thirst doesn't tie up the tongue. The children eat and drink in the

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most dainty way. It keeps them busy and relaxed for at least an hour.

Setting these tables is a great amount of work. I do this early in the morning long before school starts. The materials needed are put into the classroom closest to the chosen spot the night before. The best helpers I've ever had were children who had been part of the Roundtable in previous years. Set one whole table yourself so that any helpers can use it as a model. (With the new 20-1 law, fewer tables are now needed.) Even though this sounds like a lot of rushed work, the enthusiasm and excitement more than compensate for that.

Processional: Pomp and Circumstance as Heroes

The music plays, the children, dressed as their heroes, march down the corridor to the round tables, and in synchronized fashioned as we practiced, they sit down at their table, quickly but one child at a time. Parents and visitors are off to the side watching the march, and after the children are seated each gathers close, but not too close, to their child's table.

Adult Participation

Important adults from the community or the district office are already sitting at each table with their own set of duplicate questions which the children have already studied. The adult makes the first self-introduction, and then, one at a time, the children introduce themselves as their heroes.

The adult asks the same question to each child, but rotating out of order at the table so that no child knows *when* he will answer. It is very important to have the same question answered by each child before going on to the next question because the comparisons and contrasts are automatically realized. There is an immediate connection when the children see the universality of experiences among different heroes and different eras. The adult controls when to continue to a new question and the process is repeated until every question has been answered by each child.

Choosing these adults takes courage. You want the person to be important—a board member, a district office administrator, a community leader. But it is a guess as to who will be able to work well with children. I have always chosen adults who have a quick sense of humor in the adult world, and in two decades I have never chosen unwisely. *Never* choose your school principal. He or she is too indispensable and can be called out in an emergency at any point. Allow a principal the pleasure of wandering and enjoying it all without responsibility.

Creating a Memory

Standing back from the grassy area, the scene is four tables spread out under trees, looking formal and elegant, and eight little bodies dressed up like great historical figures around each table. It is a view to remember. When all the questions are finished, time is allowed to chit chat. The adults ask the heroes to turn the place cards around to see who the child was who brought that hero back to life. The adults usually ask the children about themselves and why they chose that particular hero.

Recessional : Return to Childhood

When all is finished, the majestic Clarke *Trumpet Voluntary* is played again, the cue for the children to stand at the same time, thank the adult, and in synchronized fashion, leave the table, one group at a time to join together at the corridor to walk with heads high back to the room. Once back at the room, the regal manners, the self control, the mature heroes—disappear. Poof! Then it's time to go outside to run and yell and be kids again. The teacher goes to bed early that night, though very proud and feeling like her teaching fantasy came true.

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Music Education for the Young Gifted

Recipe For Developing A Music Lover

BY KAYLEEN ASBO

All children are inherently musical at birth. They coo and babble melodically before they speak in coherent words, their tiny chubby bodies dance or bobble whenever they hear songs, they thrill in the percussive sounds of banging a wooden spoon on a pot, and will sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" twenty times at a stretch. I don't believe that I have ever met a preschooler who does not like music, from whom it does not bubble up spontaneously irrespective of ability. I believe that the life of a small child requires a healthy diet of fresh air, good food, love, and lots of music. All children need music.

However, the musical needs of young children differ radically from one another depending on the nature of their gifts. By the time they reach the typical age of first instrumental instruction (7), very few children are processing music as an independent phenomenon—that is, very few children have an intuitive grasp of the structure, organization, and meaning of music simply by listening or playing. The ones who do, we typically identify as musically gifted. They can hear a song or look at a page and somehow bring it to life without much (or any) explanation or practice.

A few examples will illustrate what this kind of ability looks like. My student Emma happily played a joke on me the other day. She asked me to figure out what she did differently to one of her songs, Gurlitt's *Little Waltz*. Listening for wrong notes or altered rhythms, I sat across the room momentarily stumped. She erupted into a fit of giggles. "I played it on the black keys!" she crowed exultantly. This little four-year-old had discovered for herself the principles of transposing music a half step higher—from C Major to Db Major—and was able to execute it, perfectly, at her first go.

Emma has an intuitive understanding of the basic rules of music. When she sits at the piano to improvise, her "songs"aren't chaotic, they don't trail off into nothingness or cacophony. Although there are questionable choices and harmonies that don't quite work, she somehow "knows" to repeat and imitate a musical idea. She plays the same pattern higher or lower, departs from and returns to the first melody to make a recognizable form (ABA), and always ends with chords that make the song sound finished (what musicians call an authentic cadence). I didn't teach her this. I don't usually teach this to my students until they are well into their second or third year of instruction, when they are about eight.

"In choosing students for my studio, I never screen for aural ability. I select them because I like the way their eyes twinkle or the way they smile shyly, or often because they have a creative or unique way of expressing themselves."

Emma is four and she has been studying for about six months, yet she has already internalized a sense of how music is constructed. Later, she will acquire a sophisticated vocabulary for these things that she already understands, full of terms like sequence and motivic development; but it is clear that she already knows that music is both formal structure and emotional expression. Once when asked whether a song was happy or sad, she thought a bit and then said, "It's not happy or sad. It's cloudy and sleepy." She was right.

Musically gifted children show this combination of imagination and structural understanding. Max, an extremely precocious boy, figured out all the scales on the piano after being shown one at his first lesson. He changed a note in a piece he was learning because it "sounded odd the way it was written." Investigation proved that his music had a typographical error, and he had correctly surmised the composer's intentions. After listening to a classical sonatina, he stated poignantly, "I think that the human tear ducts must be wired to respond to certain sounds."

The Musically Precocious

For musically gifted children, the most important task is to find a teacher who can challenge and guide them. They are hungry for experiences that stimulate both their intellectual and emotional connection to music, for chances to explore their own creativity through composition and improvisation. They learn and memorize things with almost fright-

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PARENT TO PARENT

Nurturing a Young Gifted Musician

Jennifer Wey, 1999 California Recipient of the Nicholas Green Distinguished Student Award

BY VIRGINIA MCQUEEN

Playing the violin is not an easy task, but young Jennifer Wey, makes it look easy. If you were fortunate enough to hear her perform during a recent youth concert, you would agree. This young lady not only plays the violin with great virtuosity, she was recently named the California recipient of the Nicholas Green Distinguished Student award. The essay she wrote as part of her application is printed in this issue of the *Communicator* (see p. 31). In an interview Jennifer's mother shared some insights to nurturing and rearing a young talented child and Jennifer offered her views of the subject as well.

Jennifer loves to make music and has a goal to make everyone that will listen, a music fan. Jennifer began studying the violin with the Suzuki method when she was three years old. This method was developed in Japan by Shinichi Suzuki, a violinist, educator, philosopher, and humanitarian who wanted to help children fulfill their capabilities as human beings. However, the teaching and learning of music is not the main purpose of the method; the primary purpose is to make good citizens and noble human beings. According to Suzuki, if a child hears fine music from the day of birth, and learns to play music, the child develops sensitivity, discipline, and endurance which brings about a beautiful heart. This philosophy is certainly being developed in Jennifer and is demonstrated within her family.

Nine-year-old Jennifer shares a home with her parents, Sefen and Calvin Wey, and three-year-old sister, Julieanne. Dad is a marketing director at a high-tech firm in California's Silicon Valley. Mother was a software engineer and worked until Jennifer was two. At that time Mom saw that Jennifer's shyness and other needs would best be met if she were at home full-time. Since then she has been active in church and other service-oriented volunteer opportunities which she feels is a positive model for children. Jennifer goes to public school in Saratoga, California.

Jennifer's mother answered many questions with conviction and insight regarding the parenting of a gifted child.

McQueen: At what age did you become aware that Jennifer had extraordinary abilities?

Wey: She talked and walked before she was one year old. We read stories to her from the very beginning. Soon she would hold the book and pretend that she was reading them herself. She would memorize stories like "The Three Little Pigs," and "read" them back to us. She began to make up stories on her own. As she learned to write, she wrote stories as well. Even today, much of her time is spent making up stories and writing them down.

She attended preschool and began reading before entering kindergarten. She has always had a good attention span and new concepts seemed to come easily to her.

She was in many activities such as gymnastics, other sports, art lessons and painting, but music was her love at a very early age. Her grandmother, a music teacher, told me that she had good pitch when she sang. She liked to listen to classical music and enjoyed moving to it. She fell in love with the violin when she was three. At four she began to play the piano. She was fascinated by the harmonica and began playing it for fun. For her eighth birthday she received a guitar as a present, fulfilling yet another musical dream.

THE WEY FAMILY: Calvin, Jennifer, Sefen, and younger sister Julieann.

McQueen: You have a three-year-old daughter. Does she show any of the same characteristics as Jennifer did at that age?

Wey: The two are quite different. They have different personalities. Julieanne is also very musical and verbal. However, Julieanne has her own mind about how she will do things. Jennifer was easy to work with.

McQueen: What are your expectations for Jennifer and how do you communicate them to her?

Wey: I want her to be happy and to be the best that she can be. Beginning at a very young age we taught her that, "You need to know what you want. If you work hard you can do anything you want." I want to encourage her to be good at something that she loves so

that she can be happy.

I saw her talent in music when she was two. In many different activities music was and is the easiest and most fun for her. Violin has always been easy. She has never had a hard time with it.

We attend church every Sunday and are active in Sunday School. This gives Jennifer spiritual lessons and helps her in growing. It gives her confidence when she is in trouble and has a downside as well as in good times. We let her know that we are much blessed to have her as our daughter.

McQueen: How do you support her to work toward the expectation to be the best that she can be?
Wey: I tell her that this (music) is your gift. You have to put in some time and some work. You have to know that you will do well and it will do well for you. I attend all of her music lessons and performances and I am active with other parents in the music lessons.

McQueen: Who were Jennifer's early playmates?
Wey: She was very shy, so I tried to make play groups so that she would have the opportunity to interact with others her own age. The violin groups were a good place to have friends. I made friends with other parents in the Suzuki violin groups for three to four years. She is still more comfortable playing with one or two friends at a time than with a large group.

McQueen: How does she get along with her peers as a nine-year-old?
Wey: She has always been mature. Perhaps that comes from being an only child for six years. She converses very capably with adults as well as children. Her teachers have always reported that she is always willing to help other children with their work when she is finished.

Classmates like her. She does not act bossy or pushy. Her music is something she enjoys and shares with others. It is not something she boasts about to her friends. I would describe her as very cautious with children her own age, but mellow. At church she likes to be with the little ones in the nursery.
McQueen: How does Jennifer feel about school?
Wey: She likes school. That is very important to us as parents. We are happy as long as she is happy and enjoys school. In second grade there was a female engineer from Lockheed corporation that worked with Jennifer as a mentor through the school. It made math more exciting for her. This year there has been none. She does well in school and although she is advanced in her studies, she thinks it is no big deal.

Jennifer had ready and assured answers when she was interviewed.

McQueen: What words would you use to describe yourself?
Jennifer: Musical, creative, likes to read and write stories, likes to play with little kids better than older kids.

McQueen: What do you like to do most?
Jennifer: I like to read mysteries and fantasy stories, write stories, and play the violin.

McQueen: What do you like to do the least?
Jennifer: Homework! It is boring!

McQueen: If you could do anything for the rest of your life, what would it be?
Jennifer: I would like to spend the rest of my life doing my favorite things: talking to my sister; playing with friends (who are not really picky and really nice); and writing stories.

McQueen: Do you use a computer for anything?
Jennifer: I like to use it to draw and to write stories.

McQueen: How does your music make you feel when you are playing for yourself and when you are performing for others?
Jennifer: I like the way music makes me feel. I can imagine all sorts of things when I am playing. Each piece has a story and it is different. I feel the way the music is. If it is fast it is usually exciting. If I am angry, I play something calm.

I get nervous when I play for judges and think to myself, "Why don't you stop looking at me?" but then I just get into the music and it carries me away. When I perform, I meet people that are pretty nice, but mostly, I just want to get it over with.

McQueen: What do you do to prepare for a performance?
Jennifer: Practice a lot! I have to focus a lot. Without music there would not be much to do.

McQueen: Do your friends at school know that you are a musician?
Jennifer: Yes, I play for them.

McQueen: What do they think about that?
Jennifer: They think it's pretty good. After I play they sometimes say things like, "You are pretty good," or, "I wish I could play like that." That makes me feel pretty good.

McQueen: If you were writing an article about yourself, what would you write?
Jennifer: I would probably say that music is important. It is not really tiring and hard. In the summer I practice around one hour a day because I have many other activities. During school I practice about two hours every day and in my free time I just play music. Someday I would like to play at Carnegie Hall because people have told me that really good musicians play there.

McQueen: What advice would you give to other children?
Jennifer: Whatever you do you should have fun.

When Mrs. Wey was asked what else she would like to share with parents she offered this: Try to do a lot of volunteer work to model doing things for other people so that your children will know that it is important to work hard and do good things. ■

My Love for Music

BY JENNIFER WEY

Jennifer Wey was nine years old and in the third grade at Saratoga Elementary School when she wrote her essay as part of the application for the Nicholas Green Distinguished Student Award. Jennifer was the first California recipient of this award which includes a $500 US Savings Bond. She lives with her parents, Sefen and Calvin Wey, and sister Julieann in Saratoga, CA.

I have loved music from the start. I was first introduced to music when my mother was pregnant with me. She wore a belt that played music around me. I think that this is one of the many reasons I got involved in music.

When I was three, my mother took me to observe a string orchestra. She asked me if I was interested in any of the instruments and I told her that I liked the violin because of the high pitched sound and also because I thought that the violin was the cutest thing on earth! My mother agreed to boy a tiny violin for me and from then on the violin and I have been very close buddies.

Another one of my close buddies is the piano. Our friendship started when I was four. My parents took me to a piano store and a man showed us many different pianos. After he ran his fingers on a piano from one end to the other, I immediately said, "Yes, this keyboard is mine now!" Since then, a second musical instrument entered my life.

When I was about five, my parents signed me up for my first competition, which was the Overseas Chinese Music Competition. I didn't quite know what that long word, "competition" meant, and so I asked my mother; she told me about the judges and the trophies. I wanted to scream and run away. I didn't like the idea of competing with people I didn't know. However, I knew that I had to compete, and that there weren't any other options. When it was time for me to perform, I took a deep breath, clutched my violin tightly, and walked on stage. After I played my piece, the judges smiled at me, and I thought, "Well, it wasn't too bad!" That day was a great day for me. I won the 1st place in the competition, got three new trophies, and even shook hands with one of my judges! From then on, competing didn't seem too hard for me anymore.

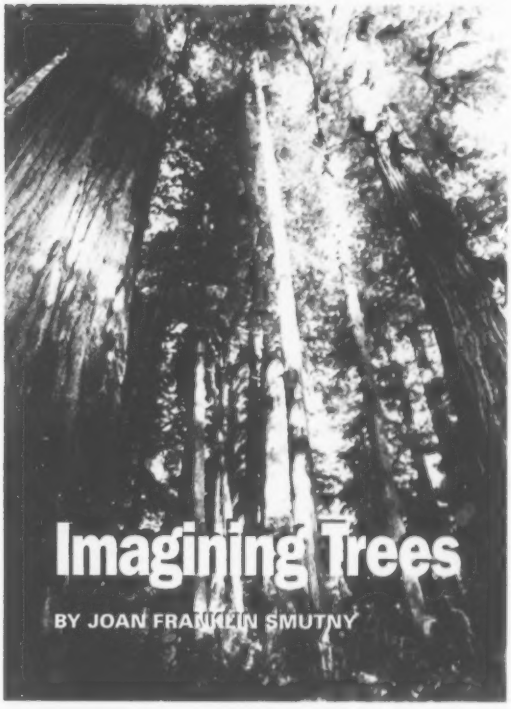
Being involved in music has had a positive effect on my life. It has helped me to become more patient because of the patience I need to make music sound nice, and it has also given me something challenging to focus on. That something is also something that I love. Playing the violin has also helped me to become more creative in my writing. I love making stories that go with music. Doing this helps me to understand the music better.

Not only has my involvement in music had a good effect on me, it has also sparked the interest of music in others. Take my sister for example. She's only two and she is already interested in music. When I play fast and happy songs, she jumps up and down happily. When I play sad and slow music, she dances dramatically. It makes me feel happy that I've made someone that is so young, interested in music. Whenever I visit my grandparents, I would play music for them. The joyful expression on their faces make me feel warm and satisfied. Besides my family, my music has also had a good effect on people I don't even know. My old violin teacher, Ms. Jan Ryan, told me many times that the kids who watched me play the violin wanted to play it too! The fact that my playing the violin has made others interested in music makes me feel that I have accomplished a good thing.

I love music and I want other kids to love it too. Because of that, I have many things I want to be when I grow up that can help show children and their parents that music is great.

In the morning, I would like to be a kindergarten teacher. I would gather all of my students every few days, and play the violin, piano, guitar, or harmonic for them, hoping that they would get interested in music. In the afternoon, I would want to be a music teacher. I would teach my students the artistic side of music and show them fun music games to help them learn new techniques. In the nighttime, I would be a performer. I would like to share my music with other music-lovers and play all kinds of music to entertain people, especially old and younger ones. In my spare time, I could do many things. I could read, write, draw, and so on! But most of all, I want to write stories. To say that another way, I want to be an author. I want to write stories about everything, but I think most of my stories are going to be about music; some will probably be about me or other musicians, and well, much, much more!

The point is that music is something that can be so easily loved. So, I want to convince kids that music is a good thing and that it isn't some kind of horrible, boring homework. But for now, I think I'll just stay happy, work hard, and enjoy my music. ■



Most young children I know love trees. They touch them, feeling the rough bark against their fingers. Sometimes they'll look up the trunk to the highest branch and imagine standing there, or watch a crow family fluttering at the top. They are quick to tell me about that special tree in their backyard they learned to climb, the tree that holds the swing at their friend's house, or the large maples in the park where they play games. They often draw trees and sometimes they pick a leaf off a branch and trace it on paper, studying the veins that make a web across the bright green surface.

Trees are an excellent subject for integrating art, science, language arts, and even history. Guided by the teacher, children can choose sources to develop project ideas of their own. With adjustments, these activities can be used for kindergarten through third grade. Basic resources I would recommend are:

- *Sky Tree Portfolio* featuring a series of paintings by Thomas Locker printed on a collection of 14 posters (text by Candace Christiansen)
- *Forest Life* by Barbara Taylor
- *The Forest Has Eyes* by Elise Maclay (illustrated by Bev Doolittle)
- *Have You Seen Trees?* by Joanne Openheim (illustrated by Jean & Mou-sien Tseng
- *Trees and Forests* by Scholastic
- *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry

If these sources are difficult to acquire, you can improvise with whatever is available through your school and by mining the many different nature books and magazines on the market. I have used Thomas Locker and Candace Christian's *Sky Tree Portfolio* extensively because it integrates science and art and is ideal for young children.

To Begin

Allow the children time to think about experiences they have had with trees. Discuss the different parts of the tree—roots, bark, branches, leaves. Through a series of questions and informal discussions, you can talk about how each of these parts contributes to the life of the tree. I always find it helpful to show a class of young children pictures of different kinds of trees and have them contribute their personal experiences with trees they know. That way you can discuss the needs of the tree for light, minerals, and water in different contexts and they will see how trees respond very specifically to different environmental surroundings.

Have books and magazines around for this initial exploration. Ask them to look at a tree and think about light and the fact that the leaves on the branches take the light from the sun and convert it into energy for the tree. You can ask: Is your tree in a forest? If so, then it lives in a shady place. If you were a tree, how would you get the light you need? The study of how light brings energy to plant life is only one aspect of trees. Here are some other areas you could explore with kids, using resources such as pictures, diagrams, and videos.

- The two main groups of trees, broad-leaves and conifers.
- Dfferent places where trees live—the poles, temperate zones, tropical areas and how these climates affect trees (e.g., the huge barrel-shaped trunk of the Baobob tree helps the tree to store water and protect is from evaporation during the dry season).
- What happens to trees in different seasons (including dry and wet for tropical climates).
- What happens to trees during the night and in the day.
- Insects and animals that depend on trees and that provide nutrients for them, and people who live in the forest and depend heavily on trees.

These are just a few options. More will evolve as

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

IDENTIFY TALENT

Continued from 1

Here is Sam, who entered kindergarten reading third-grade books. Now he is in first grade reading *Charlotte's Web* and yet he can hardly spell. At first he was in an accelerated reading group, but his eccentric spelling and practically illegible handwriting have slowed him down. Also, when the teacher asks him questions about his reading, he sometimes misses basic facts, and embellishes storylines or mistakes them.

Here is Grace, a second-grade child who always seemed quite average. Then one day, the teacher did a living history unit on Plimouth Plantation. Grace decided to put herself in the shoes of the native inhabitants of Massachusetts during that time. She wrote and illustrated stories, drew up maps, read voraciously, and recounted details of the time period—details that the teacher had never taught. The teacher wondered how she could have had Grace so long in class and never noticed her ability.

Here is Leon, a kindergartner whose only real interest appears to be climbing onto tables and shelves and humming tunes to himself. According to his mother, Leon is a talented violinist, but he is losing interest in his daily practice sessions. When the teacher asks him to play for the class, he refuses. When she asks why, he says that he wants to learn to play the tunes in his head but he can't do it.

In kindergarten through third-grade classrooms, there may be any number of reasons why teachers may miss gifted children. They can range from the unevenness of early childhood development to cultural differences, learning disabilities, unique or unconventional learning styles, low socioeconomic background, and emotional problems. All the gifted children described here may be at some risk of becoming invisible in the classroom. Because of such factors as uneven development, particularities in learning styles, talents, and cultural and linguistic differences, teachers do not always recognize who they are.

Broadening the Scope

The first step in finding young gifted children is to prepare for the diversity of talent in your classroom. In any student population, homogeneity of talent rarely exists. In the kindergarten through third-grade classroom, the variation between different gifted children increases considerably. First of all, physical, social, and cognitive development is rapid and variable in young children. Cognitive and motor skills come suddenly: one moment the skill is not observable; then it suddenly appears. Since this is the case, the use of one method of identification yields few results. Testing, for example, may work at one time and not at another; observations may yield insights into one child's language ability, while for another, it may be a highly imaginative story dictated at home to the child's mother. Another student, who at one time struggled to read school-assigned texts, may suddenly catch up and surpass classmates who had helped him previously, or a child who reads sixth-grade books may have mastered spelling and handwriting at the level of those at the lower end of the class.

There may be a gifted student in your class with learning disabilities, someone who rarely performs at the level of her true potential. An LD gifted child often feels frustrated with her performance because of the gap between potential and execution. She has a quick grasp of material presented in class and can analyze a number of elements simultaneously, but in the process of expressing her thoughts or solving problems, breakdowns arise that hinder the full development of her ideas. Then there is the highly creative child—the student who cannot seem to stop diverging from class assignments into the ways and byways of imaginative "what if" scenarios. He may feel absolutely lost in the simplest math problems because he thinks so differently from what the assignment requires. These students will show flashes of true talent, but may seem so inconsistent that they are overlooked as candidates for gifted programs.

If you teach in a culturally and economically diverse school, you may discover different kinds of talents as well as attitudes toward them. Research on the cultural values and traditions of your community will guide you to the sorts of talents and interests likely to emerge from your students. It will also sensitize you to areas of U.S. schooling and society that may be uncomfortable to a gifted Latina student, for example, or to a gifted child from a local housing project. Children from nonmainstream communities will trust you more if you demonstrate an understanding of their needs and sensibilities. There are young gifted minority or bilingual students who will camouflage their talents because their culture discourages individual distinction or at least the kind of attention that America places on exceptional ability. Americans are so used to the competitive, individualistic framework for achievement that they do not always realize how alien this can be to other cultures. If you have children who seem uncomfortable with special attention, you can provide quieter, less overt ways for identifying their strengths and letting them know that you have noticed their fine work.

A Creative Approach to Identification

Identifying different kinds of gifted children in a K-3 classroom demands a more creative approach than may be commonly used in schools. Creativity is a practical and realistic way to discover hidden talents in young students, whether

it is uneven development, learning disabilities, learning preferences, language or cultural factors that make them invisible. Using a variety of approaches over an extended period of time gives your students many alternative venues and contexts for expressing their abilities and provides you with a more accurate picture of their strengths and development.

Consulting Parents

I always encourage beginning with parents. Parents are usually the first to notice the unusual qualities of their gifted young children. They are their children's most accurate judges and are in a unique position to observe unusual flashes of talent "on the wing" so to speak. A mother may catch her five-year-old son humming a complete aria on key from the *Three Tenors* performance on television, or reading most of the words from several library books she had read to him several days before. A mother once told me that her six-year-old daughter surprised her one day by drawing a picture of the world and including Africa, Asia, and North and South America in considerable detail. She had mastered all the basic shapes, placed them in the correct places on the map, and identified them in her own handwriting. The mother said that all of this took place without her kindergarten teacher or anyone in the family teaching her geography.

An introductory letter to parents can be an effective way to begin the school year. A checklist (choosing items in this article) is a simple way that parents can provide you with some indication of their children's abilities and interests. If you allow some space for free comments, you can gain some valuable insights that might ordinarily be buried in a checklist that does not allow for spontaneous responses. Through anecdotal information, you may find keys to a student's unique talents and educational needs—or the specific learning problems keeping a child from realizing his potential.

I once did a questionnaire in which one of the inquiries was this: "Please recall a time when you felt your child exhibited special qualities (this may include anything from a general perception of talent to creative thinking, perceptiveness, curiosity, originality, unusual empathy for others, integrity, sensitivity to issues involving justice, kindness, or compassion, etc.). How did these qualities manifest themselves?" One parent responded like this:

> As a toddler, our son had an incredible curiosity about fans. This expanded to furnaces and air conditioning. He inspected every "unit" within a five block radius! Once he felt satisfied—years and years later—he expanded his interest to anatomy and space as well as music!"

This short piece could only come from a parent. Where else than in a home would such observations arise? I have found these kinds of comments—communicated either in person or on paper—to be critical to the process of recognizing and developing talent in a K–3 classroom.

Using Checklists

A practical way to find gifted children in the early years of school is to look for particular kinds of behaviors and characteristics. Checklists are useful aids to this process. Here is a list parents and teachers have found helpful:

- Has a long attention span for activities that interest him/her.
- Works independently and uses initiative.
- Loves books and reading activities.
- Is extremely curious about many things—asks "Why?" "How?" "What if?"
- Raises insightful questions about abstract ideas like love, and justice.
- Discusses and elaborates on ideas in complex, unusual ways.
- Is very interested in cause-effect relationships.
- Loves playing with number concepts and figuring out how to solve math problems in unique ways.
- Learns quickly and applies knowledge to new contexts with ease.
- Has vivid imagination and ability to improvise games or toys from commonplace materials; can generate other options for doing something in the spur of the moment.
- Is extremely creative—makes up elaborate stories, excuses; sees many possible answers/solutions; spends free time drawing, painting, writing, building, experimenting, and inventing.
- Has spontaneous and whimsical sense of humor.
- Likes to play with words. Absorbs the speech patterns and vocabulary of different people and imitates them in stories, rhythms, or games.
- Is often singing, moving rhythmically, or using mime in self-expression.
- Is responsive to music and can improvise with easily memorized tunes, rhythms, or sounds.
- Is a leader in organizing games and resolving disputes.
- Is sensitive to the feelings of others, empathic in response to others' sorrows or troubles.
- Expresses concern about world problems such as near extinction of animal species, political injustice, and poverty.
- Has a high intuitive gift and a willingness to follow "hunches" even if he or she cannot justify them at the moment they come.

You can expand, exchange, or delete any number of items to adapt the list to the unique strengths, interests, and needs of your student population. You might also like to consult the *Fisher Comprehensive Assessment of Giftedness Scale: What to Look for When Identifying Gifted Students* (Fisher, 1994). It ranks children's sensibility which is their keen consciousness, enthusi-

asm, interest, in-depth focus, and serious concern. The scale compares this essence of giftedness with children's classmates, not national norms. The scale also assesses areas of precocious development, applied motivation and creative output, aesthetic perceptions, and much more. This broader view deepens the scope for finding gifted children beyond test scores.

Adapting the Curriculum for a Variety of Talents

There is no point in looking for a wide range of talent in the classroom unless the classroom offers learning situations that allow that talent to express itself. This seems obvious, but some teachers do not recognize how vital creative teaching is to identifying talent, especially among nonmainstream populations. By creative I do not mean solely artistic (although the arts have a vital role to play in the curriculum). I mean divergent, explorative—full of impromptu inspirations and intuitive leaps, inventive, innovative. Bright children need maneuvering space in the projects they do. They need to feel that they have something to bring to the study and exploration of a subject and that they can, at least occasionally, use media and methods they choose.

I like to encourage teachers of young children to evaluate the learning space (the physical room where their class meets) and the curriculum, and to ask themselves these questions: to what extent does the daily classroom experience I provide allow young gifted children of many different types, sizes, races, socioeconomic backgrounds, learning styles and preferences to express themselves? What talents do I rate above others and to what extent does my teaching emphasize these particular gifts? Sometimes, teachers realize that they have paid less attention to a particular talent area because of pressures to adhere to a strict curriculum of academic content and skills.

A good rule of thumb to follow is to use the checklists as a guide to the development of your room and curriculum. If, for example, one of the items on your checklist is creative problem solving or musicality, then you need to explore how to incorporate these elements into the life and culture of your classroom. Perhaps you can organize your room and learning centers thematically. It is a simple matter to integrate music, theater, art, science, history, and language arts in the study of a particular subject or theme. Gifted students love mixing media and exploring a variety of facts, impressions, and experiences of a subject in their pursuit of new ideas.

One of the children described earlier in this article was a child who never appeared other than average. When the teacher encouraged the children to explore history imaginatively—to research the subjects that interested them, put themselves in the hearts and minds of those who lived then, and use whatever materials were at hand—Grace came alive. Talents that had lain fairly dormant through years of learning skills and receiving knowledge passively, suddenly made themselves known when prompted into action. There are many children out there of all ethnicities and cultures who may not be strong auditory or visual learners and they may never grow in classrooms where this kind of learning dominates. Providing learning experiences where children interact with a subject in personal, creative, as well as analytical ways, enables those students with other learning styles to feel challenged and excited.

Developing Portfolios

One of the most effective ways to document talent in young and especially minority, economically disadvantaged, creative, or learning disabled learners is to collect a wide range of their work, and to gather many observations and anecdotes describing behavior from parents and community members. This information could take the form of an ongoing portfolio and record of achievement. The process of compiling evidence should reach beyond the confines of a classroom and integrate what the child is capable of at home and elsewhere. Portfolios provide authentic assessment. Such evidence is valuable in determining instructional plans, especially for children in kindergarten through third grade.

Advantages of portfolio assessment are that it:

- Validates your observations and hunches about a child.
- Enables you to speak more informatively with parents and support staff about your plans.
- Builds a concrete bridge between you and parents so you can both see what the other is talking about.
- Helps you evaluate the child's progress.
- Guides you to a more child-centered response curriculum.
- Broadens your ideas and choices to offer your children.
- Justifies what to look for in identifying other students and becomes a learning tool for you.
- Creates a source of pride and accomplishment for the child.

A portfolio is a strength model, not a deficit one. It is a collection of products and observations about children at home, at school, and in their community. Because expressions of giftedness vary among young children and cultures, you will be looking for evidence of talent in a variety of domains—creative, intellectual, kinetic, emotional, and intuitive. You can use tapes (audio and video), projects the children have worked on, or notes casually written as part of the portfolio.

Gifted children in kindergarten through third grade do not always stand out. In many students, their age makes talent appear elusive and inconsistent. Teachers are baffled by a young child who reads advanced texts, but can hardly spell, or that a child with an exceptional gift in music cannot read notes on a page. Other talented students may be

learning English and feel out of place or fall behind the rest of the class because of poverty or some other disadvantage. Covering a wider ground of talent than one or two identification measures can possibly embrace will help you to gain a truer picture of the children in your classroom and enable you to respond more effectively to their educational needs.

Organize Seminars for Parents, Teachers, and Community Leaders

The more informed parents, teachers, and community people are about the nature of giftedness in young students, the more that can be done for them. In addressing parent and teacher groups, I find people hungry for information on this topic and eager to try new ways to identify talent and meet the unique educational needs of bright young students in the classroom. Many of them are surprised to discover that giftedness is far more complex than the stereotype held up by our society. I once met a parent who at first did not believe her young son to be gifted because he could not read or write. Yet he possessed an extraordinary artistic talent. One day, he surprised her by meticulously labeling a series of dinosaurs he had drawn. Focusing on reading and writing, this mother initially failed to see the gifts of her son or to recognize that, in some children, it takes time for skills to catch up with talent.

As a teacher or gifted coordinator, you might first talk to the principal about having seminars for parents or other teachers that will communicate the most current research on giftedness in young children. Part of ensuring the future development of these bright young students is creating an awareness of their existence and special needs. The impact such a recognition can have should never be underestimated. A gifted six-year old with a disability may languish in a classroom where his disability dictates what he is taught and how far he can go. A model of deficiency exerts a profound influence on his thinking and keeps him from ever discovering the talents that lie dormant within him. A kinetic learner who does exceptional work in hands-on, explorative activities, but only performs moderately well through a predominantly visual model of instruction, needs as much validation and attention as the child whose learning style is more visual. A bilingual child may exhibit real talent in poetic language and yet still struggle with comprehension in some areas.

Helping the adults in these students' lives recognize the full spectrum of talent in young children will pave the way for greater educational opportunity and self-expression in the classroom. Young students need to feel free to "fall in love" with something (Torrance, 1983), to test their strengths in activities that challenge and captivate them. As the teacher, you can create this freedom in the classroom, even in the most structured areas of the curriculum. As you communicate with parents, use checklists, analyze test results, assess the wide range of assignments and projects your students do in the classroom, and develop your portfolios—you may meet with some surprises. You may find strengths and abilities in children you formerly thought were intellectually average. You may discover that a young boy you considered a behavior problem is actually a highly gifted child, or a girl from a housing project is verbally precocious despite the fact that she speaks in a dialect. Be prepared for the unpredictable. Enjoy the surprise of discovering rare talents you never noticed before. ■

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YOUNG GIFTED

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not self-respecting and happy, will we have much credibility? As parents, if we don't set limits for ourselves and carve out time for activities and relationships that nurture and inspire us, who will?

Emotional Intelligence popularized the theme that a person's success in life—that is becoming the person you want to be—is about 20% dependent on innate intelligence and the rest on factors such as social arts, impulse control, stress and anxiety management, relationships, motivating oneself, delaying gratification, and self-awareness. This essential learning starts in the first days of infancy.

Being gifted means "pushing the envelope." What is abnormal for our children's age peers may be normal in families with gifted children. What issues emerge when parents suspect that a child comes with exceptional intelligence? Let's look at some situations and ways we can understand and support our children.

Paradigm Shifts into Giftedness

Recognizing that a child has exceptional intelligence initiates a paradigm shift regarding how we perceive our roles as parents and our expectations and hopes for our children. Whenever a child is recognized as gifted, parents encounter a vast range of ambivalent emotional reactions which often include confusion and anxiety about their new "job description." Parents may feel that their role has become more serious; that their children deserve special care and they wonder if they can measure up to the challenges. Many factors complicate recognizing and coming to terms with giftedness. One father reflected, "Now I've stopped seeing Joey as somebody who's always trying to challenge me, but as someone special who sees things differently from me…and he could be right!"

Fundamental to facilitating our children's development into joyful, enthusiastic respected adults is to acknowledge that, in many ways, their needs, perceptions, and experiences are qualifiably different from many of their friends. And, congruently, before parents can encourage their children to develop their selves, they need to acknowledge their own uniqueness.

Although studies show that giftedness runs in families, most parents of gifted children do not think that they are more intelligent than the norm. They recognize giftedness in their children but feel ambivalent about admitting and honoring similar qualities in themselves. One of the most frequent reactions I hear from parents who read *Guiding the Gifted Child* is something like, "I saw myself on those pages. Now I know why I never fit in. I always felt that I was on the outside looking in." In conceding giftedness in themselves, parents begin to make paradigm shifts in their own self-concepts and how they live their lives.

Energy

A fundamental factor in family relationships is energy: ours and theirs. It is not unusual for gifted children to operate at a higher energy level and to require less sleep than average children. This can render their parents exhausted and fragmented. Weary mothers concede, "There just isn't enough of me to go around." Feeling overwhelmed by time, energy, and social claims can have a devastating impact on the parents themselves and their families. It's worth taking time to set necessary limits and to refuel.

Siblings

Sibling relationship issues have a significant effect on our young children. Inherently, the older sibling will have developmental advantages over the younger ones. Parents tend to expect less of the younger children and to look for the same characteristics of giftedness in the younger children as exhibited by the first identified gifted child. Compared to their gifted children, parents tend to view their lower achieving children as less competent than they actually are. A mother told me that her younger daughter was a "late talker"; she did not speak in sentences until 18 months, four months later than her gifted child!

There are also instances when the younger child will surpass an older sibling in academic achievement. Some parents are reluctant to accommodate the younger child's learning needs appropriately for fear that the older child may feel insulted. Is it a right decision to hold one child back to make another child feel better? Can we depend on what one child needs to determine how we treat a sibling? Equity is unfair, even damaging. I've seen children resent their siblings when they figure out that their life chances are determined by what their sibling needs and wants.

Each child seeks to find his special place in the family. Children in the same family naturally compare themselves with other children in their home. This can have pervasive detrimental effects on the children whose abilities do not match up. They often measure their value by the amount of power, attention, and time that they receive from their parents. Gifted children are adept in drawing parental attention, often in subtle ways. Their advanced language, reasoning ability, and creativity often enable them to gain control. Rivalry often ensues from siblings who are vying for this parental focus. Parents have a crucial role in being sensitive to appreciating each child's unique qualities and balancing the amount of power, attention, and time they give to each child. To encourage the younger children, try not to ask the older child to "take care of" the not-as-much-younger child. This reinforces the roles of the capable and inept ones.

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Head of the household

This is a sort of sly, insidious issue. Sometimes power and dominance roles are shifted in a family with a highly intelligent child. Parents may feel intimidated by a child who can "outsmart" them. When parents suspect that their child knows better solutions than they do and depend on the child for direction, the roles and boundaries between parents and gifted children become blurred and vague. However, it's not fair to children to permit them to run the family! That's too heavy a burden! Yet, at a very young age, gifted children are sometimes observed to be the head of the household—to be the one around whom many decisions are made—sometimes even to hold the purse strings. Consequently, parents may begrudge their child for "manipulating" them.

Even very young children need to know the reasons for rules and to participate in the decision-making process so they learn how and why decisions are made. However, parents must maintain their primary role as head of the household and provide the security that young children need.

Control and Choice

Ratings of parents and teachers and self-reports repeatedly document that intellectually gifted individuals at all ages exhibit the following characteristics:

- Self-sufficiency
- Independence
- Autonomy
- Dominance and individualism
- Self-direction
- Nonconformity (P. Janos, N. Robinson, 1985, p. 165)

Isn't that a relief?! Many parents think that control issues ensue from their lack of parenting skills! Gifted people tend to have a strong sense of internal control, and it doesn't go away with age. In any given household, there are probably several people rivaling for their own self-control.

Here are some ideas to develop constructive, appropriate self-control in young children:

- Tell children what they are likely to expect. Allow plenty of lead time and give notice before they have to stop doing something or start an activity. Using a timer helps keep you out of the time squeeze.
- Give explanations and reasons for what you want them to do.
- Help them distinguish between those things which they have control over and those they do not.
- Develop shared control. Help children and family members negotiate—and preferably come to consensus—as to how they will cooperate and assume shared control. You, as the parent, will define limits of possible choices. The consequences of each alternative needs to be understood.

Especially for young children, the crux of control is in their perceiving that they have choices and that they really can make decisions that work for them, rather than be victims. Gifted children's usual astute awareness, vivid imagination, and excellent memory enable you to work with these control tendencies, helping them learn to make wise choices. From preschool on, gifted children tend to show more focused time and energy, willpower, and perseverance for what they want, that is, their goals.

Problem Solving

Raise your children on the basis of, "How are we going to work this out?" It's not the obstacles and setbacks that determine if people live productive, satisfying lives, but rather how they respond to daily challenges. Help children brainstorm, role-play, and try out new ways to react. Use creative problem solving while talking and thinking through your own decisions and coaching your children.

- Find the facts: What is involved?
- Define the problem: What would I like to be different?
- Brainstorm alternatives: In what ways might I make that happen?
- Evaluate consequences: How might this work for me and against me? For and against others?
- Find acceptance: How might I integrate this change?
- Do it!
- Reevaluate: What did I learn? How did it help? What might I try next time?

The Importance of Listening

Adults who care about young gifted children can provide the safe haven they need to express their deep feelings. Proactive listening with critical care is especially necessary with gifted children because most of them are essentially introverts. That is, they tend to protect their very vulnerable feelings inside themselves. What they reveal may not be nearly as significant as what they guard within them.

Listening builds trust. When you listen, you convey that what your child has to say is important and you build self-esteem. We tend to trust people who listen closely because we think they have such good judgment! How do you win your child over to want to listen to you? Listen, listen, listen.

When Renee wrote her college application essay on the person who had influenced her life the most, she picked her mom. Not for all the car pooling to lessons, not for helping her with homework, not for taking her on trips, nor for sitting with her during piano practice, but because, "You always listened to me and you never made me feel that my ideas were stupid." Mom influenced her the most by giving her courage and self-understanding when she demonstrated that Renee was worth hearing.

Careful listening can be a lifeline. It can convince children that there is someone who thinks that they are valuable and worth understanding. Listening says, "You matter to me; what you do and think and feel matters to me." It teaches how to

interact with respect and understanding and thus, enables your child to be a safe friend. Your listening creates courage, understanding, and trust for your child to eventually be his or her own source of power, possibility, and safe place.

Careful listening might be the single most important activity you can do for your children's social and emotional development. Here are some hints for careful listening:

- Listen, listen, listen. This may involve making an appointment for listening at another time when you can give your full attention.
- Listen with your entire body, mind, and spirit as if nothing else at that moment matters as much as this child's thoughts and feelings.
- Listen to understand what a situation means to the child, rather than to respond. Listen as if this child has something important to give to you.
- Take the child seriously. Respond with: slight head nods; "Mmmm...Uh huh,... I see." Reflect essential bits of your or your child's thoughts and feelings.
- Repeat and paraphrase what you hear. Do not add you own ideas. Be careful to use your child's own words rather than your interpretation.
- Ask for clarification and amplification: "I'd like to know how you might have felt about that. What were some of the ways you were feeling when he said that? What are some of the things you are feeling now?"
- Allow them to own their feelings. "I get it that you're furious with Rachel!" Restrain expressing your advice, evaluations, theories, and your own experiences. It is important to focus your attention on gathering information, feelings, and understanding what they signify to the child.
- Respond to their feelings. Affirm their feelings. Help them label their feelings. If children can identify their feelings, they can then do something about what their feelings are telling them. "I'm mad," might mean feeling "left out" or "embarrassed" because they feel shunned on the playground. Later, you can help the child look for constructive solutions to this lonely situation.
- Remember: Accepting and understanding do not mean agreeing.
- Remember: Feeling something does not mean doing or being something. This is part of a process of making constructive decisions about choosing behaviors.
- Arrange private time together. A few intimate minutes a day is usually healing and meaningful.
- No blame. Blaming leaves the blamer helpless. Asking questions that encourage children to find solutions to try creates confidence.
- Strive to give life to their ideas. Be aware of your positive to negative response ratio and the ways you give life and death to your child's thoughts
- Mirror rather than praise. Mirroring reflects what a project, feeling, or idea means to a child. Praise tells what it means to you.

Friends

It's unfair to allow children to perpetuate socially inappropriate behaviors. They are harmed if they do not learn what behaviors will work for them and against them. What good is it to be highly skilled and talented if other people want to close you out? Parents and teachers can privately be a safe haven. Children can receive comfort from toddlers and pets, but they also need to learn social skills that will facilitate their ways in this world.

Who is a peer and in what setting? We may be concerned that a young child does not have any real friends; however, friends do not have to be chronological peers. Young gifted children tend to select older playmates. Because gifted children are developmentally more advanced, their personalities are usually more like those of older children than most age-mates.

Some of the friend-making issues for young children are that they may:

- Make up intricate rules for games and create complex play. They gravitate to children who also crave complicated play and leave others not wanting to play.
- Come across as bossy because they can be so creative and want to organize the play to suit their new ideas.
- Realize that they sometimes see, feel, know, and can do things that others do not. This can be frightening and alienating.

Parents and teachers can help their children in making friends in many ways:

- Promote cooperation rather than competition. Most gifted children desperately want to fit in.
- Help children look for the reasons that another person might have for his ideas or (mis)behaviors.
- Help them find a variety of relationships: perhaps one child for computer sharing, another for playground romping, and another for math games.
- Role-play social situations. Let them experience the impact of their own behaviors.
- Play charades. Children need to learn to read nonverbal cues and be aware of their own social messages, otherwise they feel they have no control over how people treat them
- Be a safe friend. How we interact with respect and understanding teaches children how to be a friend, and thus, enables them to have safe friends.

"A Zillion Feelings"

Young gifted children may endure stress for many reasons. They experience life more intensely. The brain that drives them intensifies every encounter. They cook on more

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burners! Given the same situation, gifted kids will experience more stress than average children.

Our intensely emotional children may be bearing enormous loads of feelings that accumulate from fears, concern about death, anxieties, love, loneliness, deep caring for others, and excruciating self-scrutiny. When they are joyous, their radiance lights up the whole house! When they are disappointed, the weight of the world is on their shoulders.

Their feelings can be complex and ambivalent. Timmy, age 6, explained to his mother that while other children have only one feeling at a time, he has many feelings at once, sometimes a zillion feelings! Children can experience an entire range of reactions simultaneously. Sometimes emotional sensitivity and intensity affects children to the point of inhibition; they feel so much that they are almost paralyzed to act for fear that they might make the wrong action or get a negative reaction from someone.

Emotional intensity can extend to somatic expressions. Often children cannot find the words they need to describe what they are feeling. Or, perhaps, they have not yet learned how their deep feelings represent responses to what they are experiencing. Their little bodies can take over and beg for comforting through headaches, stomach aches, and rashes.

Our young children can also absorb and respond readily to the feelings of others. Sara came home from second grade and told her mother that she hated math. Her mom reminded her that she was doing very well in math. Sara explained that the other kids were having trouble learning it. Emotionally sensitive children are often protective and considerate of their peers' feelings. Sometimes, they cannot conceive the idea that other children just do not feel what they feel. Shirley, age 5, explained to her father, "I understand other children better than they understand me." Our emotionally astute children are perplexed about wondering how other children can be so inconsiderate. Feelings of loneliness can come from experiencing that no one else knows what it is like for you.

Perfectionism

Seeking perfection is not all bad, but certain behaviors associated with this ideal become concerns. It's the anger and avoidance and defeat that we want to dissuade.

Perfectionism can be situational. Sometimes adults and children's goals conflict. Children can attribute great importance to and totally immerse themselves in a project that we think is a waste of time and interferes with what we want them to do instead. A situation of perfectionism can also be mislabeled as "overachievement" when children are doing more than we think is good for them—when we think they should be satisfied with less.

Perfectionism is not pathology, and usually the child is not compulsively seeking perfection. But, especially in the early years, children's resources, experiences, and fine motor control are not able to accommodate the intricacies of their mental models. They just can't turn out what they envision in their elaborate imaginations—a breach between performance and ideals.

Here are some things that parents can do to help young children achieve what they intend and to help them accept and learn from their attempts:

- Reward trying. "Do your best" can be damaging. If we say, "It's OK how it turned out, as long as you did your best," we imply that this project represents their best effort. Not everything is worth doing our best! Encourage children to try out a skill without being committed to high performance. Sometimes, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly! Risk the attempt.
- Expect progress, not perfection. Done may be better than perfect!
- Applaud persistence. "Look at you! You kept on trying, even when you weren't sure how it would turn out!"
- Break the task down into small, attainable goals. A sense of failure comes from inappropriate goal setting. "Inch by inch, it's a cinch. Yard by yard it's hard." Learn to play two measures a day.
- Acknowledge learning. "What did you learn while you were doing this?" "What might you try next time?" "How might you do it differently next time?"
- Ask, "What's good about it?"
- Discover meaning. "What were you thinking about when you put the smile on the cat's face?"
- Honor time invested. "You gave a lot of your time to this. It must have been important to you."

Self-Soothing

Most children have not lived long enough to know many coping management skills. Their usual response to frustration is to withdraw or lash out. Yet childhood is a crucial window for shaping lifelong emotional natures. As emotional habits become established, they are harder to change later in life. Children need to be able to have some ability to regulate their moods and keep distress from swamping their ability to think. Parents can reinforce emotional management, that is, help young children find positive ways to soothe their own feelings. We can change the way we feel by what we think!

Their mind is a place to try out new experiences. Mentally walk children through experiences; review other possible behaviors and anticipate consequences. Instill an attitude of, "I can manage."

Have children pretend there is a TV set in their heads. Introduce them to the awareness that they always think in words and pictures, sort of like a TV set. They need to check if their thoughts are working for or against them. If their thinking is not helping them, they can switch channels!

Encourage reading books. It's called bibliotherapy and available to you and your kids by searching through *The Bookfinder* available in the children's sections of most libraries. It classifies age-appropriate books for you or children to read to help them understand and cope with an enormous range of stressful situations such as death of a pet, divorce, friends moving, and much, much more.

Use music, dance, physical exercise to release tension.

A Parting Gift

Parenting gifted children is asynchronous parenting. Your children are going to be ready to do some things before you think they should be and they are going to be finished with some things—like flute lessons!—before we want them to. As adults, we get as much out of an activity as we want to and often can go on to something else. I've learned that nobody really knows just the right things to do for gifted children. We can try options, evaluate if they are working, then develop the next change of course. There's a whole world out there and no one has a consciousness great enough to foresee all the full-of-wonder and joyful possibilities that we and our children can experience.

For two decades now, I've been asking parents of gifted grown-up children what they now see in hindsight as the most important message I can pass on to parents of young gifted children. Their response is almost always something like, "Tell them to trust themselves; they know their child best."

Super Valuable Resources

Jenkins, P. (1996). ***The joyful child.*** Santa Rosa, CA: Aslan Publishing. (707) 542-5400.

This is a heartwarming and scholarly sourcebook of activities and ideas for releasing children's natural joy, useful for parents and teachers. Topics include learning styles, praise, music and stress, change and much more.

Kurcinka , M. (1991). ***Raising your spirited child: A guide for parents whose child is more intense, sensitive, perceptive, persistent, energetic.*** NY: HarperCollins.

A practical popular resource for teachers and parents of children who exhibit many characteristics of giftedness—children who sometimes seem overwhelming to themselves and to their caretakers. The book has hundreds of specific suggestions to help children self-monitor and develop control of themselves. Some suggestions are effective to help harness qualities of giftedness to serve children, rather than restrict them.

Payne, L. & Rohling, C. (1994). ***A leaders guide to just because I am: A child's book of affirmation. Just because I am.*** Minneapolis: Free Spirit.

This treasure is loaded with warm fuzzy, easy ideas, and activities to convey self-esteem and confidence. It holds specific ideas on decision making, dealing with mistakes, sadness, taking care of yourself, fears, and more. All appealing and ready-to-use with reproducible Home Handouts for parents. A course on self-esteem and confidence for preschool, early elementary, day care, and the home.

Smutny, J., Walker, S., & Meckstroth, E.A. (1997). ***Teaching young gifted children in the regular classroom.*** Minneapolis: Free Spirit.

Many ideas presented in this article have been adapted from the chapter, "Understanding and Meeting Children's Social and Emotional Needs," which I wrote for this book. ■

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EARLY STIMULATION

Continued from 6

Stimulation for Infants? When and Why

To understand the importance of stimulation early in a child's life, the capability of infants must be appreciated. Infants are born with depth perception, eye-hand coordination, sensory coordination, and skin sensitivity. They express emotions and are strongly attracted to faces and voices, being especially partial to their parents. Very early, even by 2 days, infants recognize and mimic expressions and gestures that they cannot see themselves perform. Not only do babies as early as 72 hours old copy the actions of adults, they mimic emotional expressions such as smiles, frowns, and looks of surprise. They demonstrate, learn and remember, and show distinct preferences for certain sounds, shapes, and tastes. At 3 weeks they have developed rules and theories. Infants less than a month old have recognized images of objects that they have only felt in their mouths. Psychologically babies are found to be aware, expressive, and affected by their interactions with others, possessing an understanding of self from day one.

At around 6 weeks infants can distinguish color, calculate distances as to reachable or non-reachable, and see shapes and intensity of light. Infants enjoy stimulating experiences in which excitation mounts if not too fast or too high. They are bored by situations of low stimulation or sameness. Between 8 to 12 weeks the infant's capacity for interaction dramatically develops and the infant begins to smile, vocalize, and hold eye-to-eye contact.

An unexpected and important finding is that by 2 months infants have developed a locus of control, that is, a belief that they are either important to what is happening around them or that things happen to them without any involvement on their part. This is very important as it determines to a large extent how they will approach problems and it influences their worldview. The locus of control establishes patterns of personality such as whether infants will see themselves as leaders or victims; taking responsibility or giving blame; being focused or distracted. The locus of control is largely determined by how infants are treated by their caregivers. An inner locus of control results when infants' actions influence what happens to them; while an external locus of control results when the caregivers or external conditions determine all action. The quantity, timing, and degree of consistency of the caregiver's responses to the infant play important roles in developing and reinforcing the infant's belief that his or her behavior can affect the environment. Successful adults are found to be those with a strong inner locus of control.

At 2 1/2 months an infant's memory is very developed, very specific, and incredibly detailed. By 3 months of age infants begin to show curiosity, anger, pleasure, and assertiveness. They know what to expect from their mothers and are disturbed by deviation too far from the usual routine. Animation and simple playful exchanges of vocalizing and smiling by caregivers begin to establish the patterns of healthy socialization. By 3 months future language development is evident. Early laughter at complex events is seen as a good predictor of advanced intelligence.

Researchers suggest that as young as 4 months babies have a rudimentary knowledge of the way the world functions. Many regard infants from birth to 4 months as universal linguists able to distinguish each of the 150 sounds that make up all human speech and who can, by 6 months, recognize speech sounds of their native tongue. Some researchers believe that there may be a biologically programmed core of knowledge in many cognitive skills. It has been found that as early as 5 months infants have a rudimentary ability to add and subtract and to think clearly about quantities and applying numerical concepts to their world. By 5 months of age infants can track moving objects visually and can sense object permanence. Not only do they anticipate the reappearance of an object that moves behind a screen, but also if a different object emerges, they will look back to the screen to find the missing object. Experiences that infants have at 6 months can be remembered 2 years later. Such evidence indicates that infants are far more capable than we have assumed.

Neuroscientists are studying what happens in the brains of infants when they learn to talk or develop concepts. Studying the brain's organization and responses to learning in infants will continue to aid psychologists and educators to enrich and optimize development. However, we already know from the available research that parenting must be very flexible and individually tailored to the unique needs of each infant.

How to Appropriately Stimulate Infants—Creating the Responsive Learning Environment

When we consider the amount of stimulation usually available to infants, especially those who are kept in a basket or enclosed crib with their field of vision restricted, it is easy to see how much more could be done to take advantage of this sensitive learning period. It is not only the quantity of stimulation that seems to influence intellectual development but the quality of interaction as well. Differentiated, meaningful interaction is necessary. The most effective stimulation will occur in a responsive environment. The key is to follow the lead of the child. Each infant is unique and the patterns of response will differ. Both people and objects in the environment can be growth producing only if they have some meaning or use for the child. Appropriate stimulation can occur during everyday tasks as

90% of all interactions with infants occur during caregiver activities such as feeding, changing, and bathing.

Stimulation for Toddlers (10 months through 2 years)

This period has been established as the most decisive for intellectual development. It will bring essential growth in language, curiosity leading to motivation, social development, and intelligence. During this period, however, the major driving force for the child seems to be curiosity. Unreasonably applied limits and controls can cause frustration, leaving an aimless, internally unmotivated child as a result. Allowing a toddler to freely explore the environment, made safe by having dangerous items placed out of reach, is the single most important action to ensure intellectual growth. Toddlers are remarkably curious about things adults would find totally uninteresting, such as hinged doors, cellophane wrappers, tiny pieces of dust, and plant leaves. Expect fascinated repetitions of exploration. As the toddler experiments and interacts with the environment, guidance is necessary, but whenever possible, the natural environment should be used to provide correction for the child's misjudgments. In this way natural consequences can themselves become teachers and the child can begin self-initiated, autonomous learning.

Also, during this period of beginning mobility, the pattern for discipline will be established. As a part of creating a responsive learning environment the way that children are disciplined communicates the beliefs and values of their family; it also contributes to their understanding of appropriate ways to handle problems, and models behaviors of support and guidance or induces anger and fear. Methods of discipline can enhance or inhibit the curiosity, inquiry, and confidence that optimizes learning. While each child responds differently to various methods of discipline, keep in mind that your actions teach far more than your words and that each action has long-term as well as short-term consequences. Positive guidance has proved far more productive of good behavior than punishment.

Intellectual Development During Early Childhood (2 through 5 years)

Language is a mental tool that allows thinking to be more abstract, flexible, and independent from any immediate stimuli. Language builds the cognitive processes, in part, by allowing the child to imagine, manipulate, and create new ideas, and by facilitating a shared experience and exchanging social information with others. To directly influence the future development of higher mental functions, research suggests giving children chances to hear and practice language both oral and written early in their lives. As children continue to develop language of their own, there are a variety of strategies that can be used to support them.

- Affirm what the child says and expand it.
- Ask a question about the child's statement.
- Expand the vocabulary by reading books with the child.
- Ask open-ended questions while reading.

During the 2- through 5-year period the child's mental powers show rapid growth. Speech, mobility, and increasing social involvement all add to the fast-paced intellectual development. While 2-year-olds may seem inflexible and are very vocal in their demands, their curiosity is high and their energy is abundant. While they enjoy routine, they seem to have difficulty making up their minds. By 3 years old children become much more secure about their world. Language and motor abilities are developing rapidly and social skills are increasing. This age group needs caregivers to explain and model behaviors such as generosity, altruism, and care for others. During this time of rapid growth for the toddler it is important that all modes of learning be nurtured; physical, cognitive, emotional, and intuitive. Many characteristics of giftedness may already be evident and should be supported.

After 3 years of age an educational program with other children becomes important. The more planned educational experiences a child over 3 years has, the better that child does in intellectual, language, personal, and social development. By age 4 years children are very verbal, alert, curious, attentive, active, and can easily be engaged in the excitement of learning. At this age children show emotions that make it relatively easy to provide an appropriate learning environment responsive to the child's needs and interests. While these children still live in a "me first" world, by watching them they will let you know everything you need to know to enhance their intellectual development. Affection and responsiveness to the child's needs, a stimulating and varied environment, encouragement of exploration and independence, and fair discipline show a high correlation with positive child development.

The Results of Early Stimulation

It is important to understand average developmental patterns of infants and children so that advanced and accelerated development can be noticed. It is also important to be aware of how to optimize learning for all young children for it is during this early period that giftedness is nurtured. Once the parent or other caregiver begins to notice exceptional ability or unusually rapid development other concerns must be addressed. If children begin to show ability ahead of their same-age playmates that are 1/4th to 1/2 their age (e.g., a 3-year-old that is a year or 1 1/2 years ahead or a 4-year-old that is 1 or 2 years ahead) they may be considered gifted in some area(s). Early development of

language skills, including reading, are perhaps the easiest to spot, however, advanced reasoning skills, a long attention span, and unusual amounts of imagination, curiosity, and/or risk-taking could be signs of an accelerating neural system.

There are special issues that may arise when you find you are parents of young, gifted children. Be prepared to:

- Accept your child as different; wishing that your child were "average" may seem to the child like rejection and become damaging.
- Use developmental timetables only as guides. It is likely that in many areas your child will not follow the timetables of more average learners and special modifications will be necessary.
- Tolerate diplomatically suggestions of family, neighbors, and friends, who believe that you are pushing your child; they could limit the level and type of experiences you provide for your child.
- Consider your needs and those of the rest of the family, the family time available, and the family budget when meeting the needs of your gifted child. A balanced approach is important and will go far in allowing a view of life that is optimistic, energetic, and joy-filled (Robinson, 1993).

The evidence in this article supports the importance of optimizing the early periods of learning if the child's potential is to be actualized. It is increasingly clear that the roots of intelligence can be found not only in the genetic endowment of the individual, but also within the early experiences the individual has with the environment. Early stimulation is vitally important to optimal development of the lives of children. ■

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KALEIDOSCOPE

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Young children encounter problems during play such as how to pretend to cook dinner without a toy stove. Usually they pretend a chair, box, or something else is a stove and solve their problem without adult assistance. Children may also enjoy "dressing up" and assuming various pretend roles while they play. The example below illustrates how a four-year-old handled the problem of how to be a dog.

One Friday morning, unbeknownst to his mother, Jordan decided to be a dog. He demonstrated the first hint of this when he hung a sock over each ear and crawled into the room where his mom was working. Mom was not sure what to think until she heard Jordan bark, a real sign that he meant to be a dog. Jordan the dog barked in several different tones, but after Mom played along, petted the dog-child, and repeated "nice doggy" many times, she returned to her work. Jordan, however, was not through playing dog, nor was he satisfied with the amount of attention his mom allowed him. Soon, he returned, crawling into the room with a plastic bowl in his mouth, and dropped it in front of Mom.

Jordan then began to whine like a dog and rub his face against Mom's leg. When Mom failed to recognize his need for food, the dog-child began to howl, and finally Mom decided to get with the plan and find the dog some food. Jordan ate the Cheerios Mom provided from the bowl in a dog-like manner, eventually tired of the game, and later Jordan the boy returned.

It appears that Jordan's behavior was creative. If he had not seen socks placed over someone's ears to make them look more dog-like then we can describe this as original. He may have used flexible thinking when he did not get food from Mom the first time he entered the

room. Davis and Rimm describe flexibility as "the ability to take different approaches to a problem, think of ideas in different categories, or view a situation from several perspectives " (1994, p. 189). If Jordan's goal was to bark to get food and when this did not work he approached the problem differently by getting a bowl, then he was a flexible thinker.

All of the scenarios depict real children whose creative thinking resulted in tangible products including a song, a picture, a doll blanket, and hats. In many other instances creative thinking is not so obvious, such as when it involves a different way of doing something resulting in the same action or product as the old way. For example, a young child who has been taught to count the silverware when setting the table for dinner may instead choose to say the name of each person to be seated while getting it. This results in the appropriate table setting, and even though the child could easily count, it may have been more interesting to complete the task using people's names. Later, in school, creative thinking may be demonstrated as students provide alternative methods for completing math problems.

Children use creative thinking in obvious or subtle ways during problem solving, when producing things, and a multitude of other ways. Adults may recognize it by the way children put words together in an interesting form or the extent to which they describe an occurrence.

Suggestions to Encourage Creativity

Value Creativity. What are your own views about creativity? It is important to continually expand our views and definitions of creativity in order to encompass multiple domains and facets of our lives. Look for creativity. Whether at a concert, business meeting, the grocery store, or watching television, note unique ways in which information is presented and problems are solved. The children are watching, and they are quick to catch on to what parents accept and model.

Ask Good Questions. Standard what, where, and when questions, such as "What is your teacher's name?" "Where did you go after school?" and "When do you have recess?" do not encourage creative thinking or discussion. When a child replies with what is often a single word answer, parents must ask another question to gain any real information. Plan to ask questions that give the child a chance to be fluent and elaborative or to give original ideas that may come from a unique perspective. Following are a few suggestions for types of open questions that allow the child to think of multiple answers.

How would _____change if _____?
What would happen if _____?
What do you think about _____?
What do you think should have happened?
If you were _____, what would _____ look like? (perspective)
What is another way to _____ ?

One of the easier ways to ask questions and initiate conversations with children is to begin by reading a book. Children especially benefit from hearing stories about book characters who model creative thinking and a short picture book resource list is provided at the end of this article. A more complete list and other suggestions may be found in *Creative Thinking and Problem Solving for Young Learners* (Meador, 1997). Following are questions about *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) based on the questions starters listed above.

- How would the story change if the Wild Things lived by the sea?
- What would happen if the Wild Things did not let Max become King?
- What do you think about the way Max's mom put him to bed without any supper?
- What do you think should have happened instead?
- If you were a Wild Thing, what would Max look like? What is another way for Max to get from his room to where the Wild Things live?

Provide Creative Space. Young creative children often make things and although individual pieces, such as the hats described above, may be completed quickly, others may take several days or longer. Families experience difficulty when siblings rearrange projects, when company comes and the child's room needs to be neat, or when adults simply can no longer stand what appears to be a mess. Much anguish will be spared if children are provided a space where they can place their work without fear of sibling or adult invasion. It is vital that children learn to think about, plan, and implement creative ideas and to then persist until satisfied with a task. It is hard to commit to this when they fear their project may be dismantled at any time.

Children also need psychological space where they can play with creative thoughts without fear of being laughed at or reprimanded. At times an adult's first instinct is to remark that the idea is "crazy" or "silly." Yet, it is best if children can avoid inappropriate adult reactions and self-criticism until they have fully explored an idea. The phrase "interesting idea" is often appropriate when children want some type of reaction to their creative thoughts.

At times it is difficult for adults to determine whether a child is exercising creativity or simply getting into trouble. No matter how novel the lipstick drawing created on a wall by a youngster, adults do not want to encourage this inappropriate activity. In this case, the child must learn where and with what tools he or she must draw.

Creativity can bloom in the same environment where children learn responsibility and respect for the property of others.

Summary

Children display their creativity in ways that will surprise, delight, or possibly upset adults. Their creative abilities emerge in an environment that values and encourages creative thinking, and early forms of creativity may evolve into important problem-solving and product development during later years. Learn to look for and enjoy the kaleidoscope young children provide as they practice creative behaviors. ■

Recommended Picture Books

Anaya, R. (1995). *The farolitos of Christmas.* New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Carle, E. (1996). *Little cloud.* New York: Philomel Books.

Day, A. & Darling, C. (1997). *Mirror.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Girox.

Emerson, S. & Post, H. (1994). *The magic boots.* Layton, UT: Biggs Smith.

Gray, L. (1993). *Miss Tizzy.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Kilborne, Sarah (1994). *Peach and Blue.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Mathers, P. (1998). *Lottie's new beach towel.* New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

McNaughton, C. (1996). *Oops!* San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company.

Perry, S. (1995). *If.* Venice, CA: Children's Library Press.

Ross, T. & Barron, R. (1994). *Eggbert the slightly cracked egg.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Say, A. (1996). *Emma's rug.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Schenk de Regniers, B. (1997). *What can you do with a shoe?* NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books.

Yamaka, S. (1995). *The gift of Driscoll Lipscomb.* New York: Simon and Schuster

Yorinks, A. (1990). *Ugh.* New York: Michael di Capua Books.

Recommended for Parents

Amabile, T. (1989). *Growing up creative: Nurturing a Lifetime of Creativity.* New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.

Meador, K. (1997). *Creative thinking and problem solving for young learners.* Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press/Libraries Unlimited.

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PORTFOLIOS

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reorganize information to produce a product unique for that age or level. The products may substantiate your child's interest and expertise in topics that are not typical.

Products selected for a portfolio must be completed by the child without assistance for two important reasons. Foremost, because your child's self-esteem is influenced by his or her competent personal achievements. Remaking products into adult projects risk children acquiring feelings of doubt and ambiguity about their abilities. Secondly, the portfolio will be taken more seriously when the products look child-appropriate rather than adult-level perfect. Educators are suspicious of products that suggest extensive adult intervention.

A portfolio should be an integral reflection of what a child has learned rather than artificial activities and isolated skills. The list on page 11 is meant to prompt ideas of the wide range of products that might be appropriate for young children's portfolios (adapted from Kingore, 1999).

To Whom Do You Show the Portfolio?

Work within the structure of the school system. If your child is in school, begin with your child's teacher. If no teacher currently works with your child, or if you do not feel satisfied, proceed as necessary to meet with the next person empowered to help: the counselor, principal, coordinator of gifted education, if one is available, and curriculum or subject area coordinators. Each of these individuals has demanding work loads so make appointments in advance and be well-prepared to build your case in a succinct, tactful manner.

A Final Encouragement

As parents, accept the inevitable—we can not do and say what is right

all the time. We can, however, sincerely love our children enough to continue to try to support what is in their best interests. Be an advocate whose only motive is to ensure your gifted child's right to an appropriate education. If we are motivated by children's best interests and not our ego needs, our efforts will usually guide us in the most appropriate direction. ■

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Turn the Century at the Century Plaza!

38th Annual CAG Conference, March 3–5, 2000

The 2000 conference introduces a variety of new sessions presented by a panel of experts: specialized clinics, controversial debates, provocative panel discussions, in-depth two-hour training sessions, and differentiating in specific content areas.

You'll also have the opportunity to choose from over 100 workshops during the 3-day conference, attend the optional Pre-Conference, visit classrooms, participate in special events that take place in interesting venues throughout the city, and learn how to effectively navigate the Web in the CyberClassroom. Sunday features a daylong conference for parents and a Student Seminar for youth, grades 6–12.

Festured speakers include:

- **Myron Denbo, USC**
- **Barbara Clark, California State University, Los Angeles**
- **Jerry Flack, University of Colorado**
- **Sandra Kaplan, USC**
- **William McComas, USC**
- **Sidnie Myrick & Catlin Robinera, UCLA Writing Project**
- **Edgar Mitchell, astronaut**
- **Christopher Nance, meteorologist, NBC news**
- **Sally Reis, University of Connecticut**
- **Linda Sheffield, University of Kentucky**

PROJECT SAIL

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their journals.

Other days students compared an ancient Roman city to our city today. A Venn-type diagram was put on the board and the students were asked to show what it meant. Another day students compared and contrasted kings and queens. To the surprise of the adults, there were few differences—queens can be moms, kings can have beards—but many similarities.

All of the primary grades used compare and contrast diagrams during the program. A second grade group compared Romanesque architecture with Gothic. The similarities were that both were large and made of stone. They said that Romanesque castles had round windows, had moats, and thick walls. They said the Gothic cathedrals had pointed arches, spires, and rose windows. Many adults would have difficulty being so accurate.

While studying the Baroque period, students learned of the elaborate and exotic food eaten by kings and queens. As an introduction to writing, students were shown kiwi fruit. They touched, smelled, and ate it if they wished. Next they created analogies. One student said the kiwi was like "soft coconut," another said it was like an "egg with fur."

Drama

Children learned about the ideals and concepts of each of the time periods by being kinesthetically involved. When discussing the stability of the ancient Egyptian culture, the students made themselves into pyramid shapes, one of the most stable shapes on earth. When learning about the Greeks' value of balance and harmony, the children stood in balanced and harmonious ways. They then contrasted this with unbalanced and unharmonious ways of standing and interacting. During the study of the Baroque period, they moved in swirling and energetic ways using scarves to emphasize the movement of drapery. They contrasted this approach to painting and sculpture in the Middle Ages. They did the exercise again using music from these two time periods.

The end of the three weeks culminated with a Summer Drama Festival. Each class performed an original ten-minute play that focused on a time period. One class dressed as fairies and performed their own version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Another class created a play based on Greek and Roman mythology, while another class marched to "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

Math

The math program included hands-on problem solving math and an individualized program called Kumon Math. With the former, students explored spatial and visual activities involving geometric shapes, math problems with manipulatives, and a variety of number systems including Egyptian and Roman numerals. Students were involved in problem solving, learned about symmetry, built architectural elements, learned about the invention of plus and minus, and created their own number system.

Kumon is a Japanese math method developed over 35 years ago by Toru Kumon to help his son who was having difficulty with math. Kumon is an extremely sequential set of worksheets designed to develop students' speed and accuracy in math. This individualized math program provides a way for basic math facts to become automatic for students. For the most part, Kumon is totally self-teaching. Therefore a classroom teacher can have 20 students on 20 different stages of Kumon.

University School has used math manipulatives, calculators, higher-level thinking and problem solving since the school began in 1982. Students always understood math concepts, enjoyed math, and did well on standardized tests. Yet, until our students began Kumon, we had a problem. Students had not committed math facts to memory and no amount of jingles, jumping to numbers, or classroom games had brought them to the point of internalizing basic math facts. Now our students are confident, competent, and winning top math awards.

Kumon is not meant to be a total math program. The reforms that the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and others are proposing are needed. However, that is not a reason for an either/or dichotomy. A program, like Kumon, that is highly sequential, self-teaching, and that provides for the necessary "overlearning," is an essential adjunct to any program that hopes to make the most of students' math potential.

Kumon is particularly good for young children because it helps them develop fine motor skills as they develop their math skills. Kumon begins with colorful mazes and dot-to-dot activities. Because Kumon is individualized, it allows children who are mathematically talented to continue to more advanced levels without waiting for the rest of the class. A by-product of Kumon is the way it develops focus and concentration in students.

Conclusion

The purpose of Project SAIL is to identify and develop gifts and talents in economically disadvantaged students. In order to reach that goal, the program provides in-depth staff development for teachers and promotes involvement of parents in their children's schools. The 55 parents and teachers involved in Project SAIL this summer will be back in the fall for the Parent and Teacher Institute, in the winter for the Winter Drama Festival, and in the spring for the Renaissance Fair. Their students will return with them as they perform their original plays for the Drama Festival and exhibit their original products at the Renaissance Fair.

SAIL curriculum and books are based on interdisciplinary active

learning. Each time period from ancient Egyptian to Romanticism is addressed through the major values or ideals of the era. For example, the prime values of ancient Egypt were permanence, stability, and the promise of an afterlife. Students learn how the art, architecture, and daily life reflect those ideals. As they learn about the seminal ideals of each time period, they are able to compare and contrast the Classical with the Neoclassical or the Baroque with the Renaissance. We have found these materials to be effective not only for the young students at University School but also for the economically disadvantaged students in Project SAIL.

Young gifted children have needs that are unlike those of other children. They have a huge thirst for knowledge. They ask endless questions. Who? What? Where? Why? When? They want to know all the facts and are good at remembering even the most minute details.

Their brains seem wired to want and need more intellectual stimulation than other children. It is almost as if their neurons are most happy when they are sending messages and developing their dendrites. For very bright children, learning and acquiring knowledge seem to be intrinsically satisfying. We can and must provide for the needs of young gifted children. ■

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For more information about University School, Project SAIL, or SAIL books call 918-631-5060, fax 918-631-5065, e-mail debra-price@utulsa.edu., or write University School at TU, 600 South College, Tulsa, OK 74104.

PLAY

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His report includes a table of contents, bibliography, glossary, and index. As a final product to augment their reports, the students are to select a medium to demonstrate their understanding of the topic. Sam has selected to use the Our Community toy basket to create a floor model of the inventions affecting our life. He has planned to build a city with the toys and label all the inventions within his city created of toys from the basket. He asks the teacher if he and his friends can "play invention" in the city once it is constructed.

Kim has finished reading the chapter book she had been assigned in her kindergarten-first grade classroom. She is heading toward the sandbox on the playground adjacent to her classroom to create a scene to illustrate the main idea of the story and one event that depicts the conflict between the characters. She has collected flowers, sticks, and other assorted items to create her scene.

Play Experiences as a Bridge to Differentiated Learning Opportunities

Careful observation of children at play is a method used to assess the needs, interests, and abilities of students. Educators intervene with children at play for a variety of reasons:

- to discern the purposes or objectives for their activities
- to determine the level of sophistication and proficiency at which they are functioning
- to define the potential interests and direction other learnings can take as a consequence of their involvement in the play process.

Recognition of a child's giftedness and the need to differentiate learning for the child should enable educators to redefine their interactions with the young gifted child at play. A different set of questions used as prompts can be directed by the educator to the young gifted child with the intent to motivate the student to transcend the current play experience to enter another level of play or academic investigation.

Mario was creating a tower of blocks, books, and other assorted items to determine how high he could stack them before "they came tumbling down." While the play activity was typical of young children at play, the teacher recognized Mario's giftedness and felt the need to respond to it. Walking over to the teetering tower of objects, she asked Mario if he knew how tall buildings were stabilized and fortified against earthquakes. "Strong glue," retorted Mario.

This encounter led the way for the teacher to ask three more questions:

1) What trends in architecture have enabled us to build tall skyscrapers without concern for them to topple?
2) How has the use of different materials over time in the construction industry facilitated taller and safer structures?
3) What is meant when we state that structure follows function?

The teacher immediately supplied Mario with a shopping bag filled with books and pictures related to architecture and buildings.

The artificial dichotomy between play and work, or play and academic challenge, is as superficial as the arbitrary division between the gifted child or giftedness and play or the role and importance of play in a young gifted student's life. While some play must be enjoyed by young gifted children for its natural value as it should for all children, play for young gifted children can be the preface, follow-up, or bridge to an advanced or differentiated learning experience. ■

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TREES

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children interact with the different materials you provide.

Integrating Subjects and Media

After exposing the children to different kinds of trees, climates, and environments, ask them to choose a tree species and to imagine they are that tree. Give them plenty of time to talk about the different possibilities, review pictures, storybooks, posters, or even watch a short video on forests. Next, stimulate their imaginations through a series of leading questions:

- Where do you live?
- What kind of climate do you live in? Is it dry? Rainy? Cold? Warm?
- What kind of land surrounds you? Woods? Rocks? Desert? Hills?
- What kind of bark do you have? What do your leaves look like? How tall are you?
- What kinds of animals live around you? Inside you? Who crawls or hops on you?
- What do you have that helps the animals around you?
- Are there other trees around you? How tall are they? How wide?
- What are the greatest needs of trees like you?

Children can respond to these questions by drawing, writing, or discussing their thoughts with the teacher or with each other. Catalysts are critical to this process. I use Thomas Locker's *Sky Tree Portfolio* because each poster is a work of art and depicts a single tree in a wide range of seasons, weather conditions, and times of the day. On the back of each poster, author Candace Christiansen raises questions about each tree and provides a couple of paragraphs on some vital aspect of tree science. For example, on the back of "The Summer Tree" painting, she asks: "What does the tree do during the long summer days?" She continues: "All summer the tree bathes its leaves in the light of the sun. The leaves also take in air. The roots are actively absorbing water and minerals from the soil. The water, air and minerals meet in the green leaves and with the help of the sunlight, the tree creates its own food: sugars. No human being or animal can create sugar out of air, earth and water. It must be interesting to be a tree!" The portfolio is an exquisite blending of art and science that invites young gifted children to enter the world of trees with knowledge and imagination.

You can produce a similar effect as *The Sky Tree Portfolio* by collecting and laminating photographs and calendar pictures and writing some text of your own under each. In this way, the children discover some new facts about trees, while also feeling the beauty and artistry communicated by the artist. The combination of science and art will enable young students to explore different ways of expressing scientific facts creatively, and conversely, their creative ideas will prompt them to seek to dig deeper into the science behind their stories, poems, drawings, sketches, even dramatizations. Students can represent the daily process of making food for themselves; of the kinds of animals, birds, and insects that surround them; and of their feelings about seasonal and other changes.

Encouraging Divergent Thinking and Production

I always find it helpful to offer suggestions on how they might approach their imaginative work. What should they focus on? Here are some ideas that have worked well with young gifted children (you will have to adjust them to the age and ability of the children you teach. I encourage them to use whatever medium or media they like—writing, painting, sketching, diagrams, oral tellings, silent movement, dramatization.

- If you are a very old tree (200 years old perhaps), tell or show a couple of the most amazing events in human history you have seen.
- Think about your most favorite season—why do you love it best? What are you doing in that time? How does it feel?
- Tell a story about how you, as a tree, saved a person's life. Or tell a story about a special person who stopped someone else from chopping you down.
- Express how you feel about your leaves. what do you like best about them? What do they do for you? How does the sun feel when it's beating down on them? Tell a story about your leaves.
- What would you say was the scariest moment in your life? (Possibilities: anything that would endanger the trees bark, roots, access to sunlight; or human actions such as chopping to widen a road or make room for a foundation, chemical applications.) How did you survive?
- Focus on the animals that live in and on you. Who are your favorites? The squirrel family who sleeps at night in the hollow on one side of your trunk? The crow family who sleeps in a large nest on your highest branches? The sparrows who chirp around you all day long?

There are many other possibilities. This is just to get them started. When gifted children are thinking about what to do, I try to keep them focused on what most interests them about trees and I offer suggestions on how they might explore these interests. I also help them consider what media would give them creative latitude and enable them to display their understanding. If they enjoy drawing, I point out that they can draw the inside of the tree, or sketch the unique, inter-

connecting shapes of the bark in a close-up vision of a piece of the trunk. They can also create an expressive painting of the tree at a particular moment, or a series of images on the theme of the tree's root—the relation of a tree's roots to people's roots. A poem or story can accompany this, or a dramatization.

For gifted children, this process can go on for some time. With some guidance and encouragement from you, they can begin to experiment and even diverge from original representations. The poetically inclined might attempt to represent the feelings deep inside the tree when winter arrives and the birds fly south. Another might choose to write a letter from a tree to humans, pleading for them to stop chopping the forests and telling them a history of its own tree family. Another child might create a series of science diagrams and mix these with expressive images of trees—highly subjective and original. Young gifted children will love the process of mixing media, impressions, ideas both scientific and artistic, and finding a way to create a new vision of the rich and wonderfully varied world of trees.

The mighty tree stands over the bushes*

Like a mighty king
Standing proud and tall
Swaying with joy in the wind
the bushes quivering
in the presence of this character
its once green leaves turn
bright yellow and red
falling one by one on the dark soil
for it is fall now; the leaves raked up
but its green leaves will come again.

* A poem by a young gifted child in a creative writing class taught by Joan Franklin Smutny

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Computer Software for Young Gifted Children

Arthur's Teacher Troubles (ages 6–10)
A humorous interactive spelling program developed by the Learning Company. SoftKey, International, One Athenaeum St., Cambridge, MA 02142. Tel: 800-227-5609, www.softkey.com

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very easy to use, with no reading required! Offers fascinating and fun exploration of ten areas of learning. A Parents' Choice Award winner. Knowledge Adventure, Inc. 1311 Grand Central Ave., Glendale, CA 91201. Tel: 800-542-4240, www.adventure.com

Storybook Weaver (ages 6–10)
A program to motivate children in creating their own person stories developed by MECC. SoftKey, International, One Athenaeum St., Cambridge, MA 02142. Tel: 800-227-5609, www.edmark.com

The Writing Center (ages 6–10)
Helps children type, design, and print their own writing. Developed by the Learning Company. SoftKey, International, One Athenaeum St., Cambridge, MA 02142. Tel: 800-227-5609 www.softkey.com

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MUSIC EDUCATION

Continued from 28

ening rapidity, and need new pieces constantly. My typical musically gifted six-year-olds will memorize close to 100 songs in the course of their first year of study (Annie set the all time record with 128).

These students love playing in duets and ensembles, and it gives them a thrill as high as any they will know in life. Many of these children thrive on performing and go into an altered state (my beloved student Allegra named it "Music Land") that brings out a magical quality when they are in front of an audience. For these children, music is their primary language. A day without playing is like a day without speaking. Often, they begin begging their parents for lessons at an extremely young age. One little girl simply said, "I will die if I don't get lessons. It is more important than food." Vacations away from their instruments can make them crabby and edgy, or morose and moody. You will find them fingering away their pieces on their laps or on the restaurant table.

Stories of young prodigies fill up the biography shelves, but in truth, these students are extremely rare. The average music teacher may encounter only one in an entire career, while a prestigious pedagogue may still have only a half-dozen at any time. They are every teacher's dream; in the words of a colleague, "they are the ones that you live for."

Parents can tilt the odds towards producing a major talent through intensive early exposure. Emma, for example, participated in Kindermusik classes as a toddler, had weekly Orff instruction at her preschool, and lives in a home where she is surrounded by classical music—all factors which prepared her for musical excellence well before she began her first piano lesson.

There is much evidence to support the idea of a critical developmental window for such musical aptitude, with pronounced gains in "talent" emerging from early experiences—and the earlier they occur, the more powerful they are. A common factor with almost all of my musically gifted students is an early enriched environment, where music (singing, dancing, percussion instruments, focused listening) was as much a part of daily toddler life as coloring or blocks or Playdoh. New parents, take note!

Developing Musical Talent

There is another kind of student however, who is also capable of becoming a superb musician. This is the gifted child who is not inherently musical. My favorite comment from members of the audience after a recital or competition is, "...but all your students are so talented; they are all so musical! How did you find them?"

However, relatively few of my students actually begin as musically gifted. In choosing students for my studio, I never screen for aural ability. I select them because I like the way their eyes twinkle or the way they smile shyly, or often because they have a creative or unique way of expressing themselves. Frequently they are best friends with a current student. The qualities of curiosity, passion, and perseverance are far more critical than "ear." For me, it is critical to first sense a spark of connection with the individual and then identify what the nature of their giftedness might be. I can then turn their nonmusical abilities into a bridge, or a translator for the abstract world of sound. Discovering a new student's profile, following the multiple intelligence model of Howard Gardner, is my first task as a teacher.

Hooking Onto Math

Some students may be mathematically oriented and excel at chess or games of logic. These students will find the musical expression of logic fascinating. They will love using the tools of analysis to "decode" music, and will be in their element when introduced to a Bach fugue. They will actually like music theory (a rarity amongst performers), approaching every piece of repertoire as a mystery to be unraveled. Questions such as, "Where is the main theme?" "What happens to it in the middle or the end of the piece?" "What is different between these two lines?" "How are these two pieces alike?" "Why do you think the composer chose this particular chord?" "Why did Mozart use such a dissonant sound here?" will captivate their interest.

I have one student, now an accomplished young pianist of nine, who I first "hooked" into music during first grade by spreading out musical/mathematical equations ($\mathbb{J} = \mathbb{J}\,\mathbb{J}\,\mathbb{J}\,\mathbb{J} > \mathbb{J}$) on the floor and asking him to find the ones that were incorrect. We then played war with a set of rhythm cards, and he would rattle off the sum of both rhythms (half note plus dotted quarter note equals three and a half counts). This was his favorite part of the lesson, and the base on which we built his love of music.

Verbal Talents

Other students discover a passion for music through language and storytelling. I have them write words or lines of poetry in their musical scores, much like Erik Satie did. I may ask, "What fairy tale does this remind you of?" or "Does this theme sound like a grumpy father, a witch, a troll, or the bully at school?" "What about this one—a baby, Bambi, your little sister?" We'll take a favorite poem or nursery rhyme, clap it out, decipher the rhythm, and then they will set it to music—their own music.

Visual-spatial Students

Judges at music competitions are often taken aback by my visual-spatial students. Their scores almost resemble medieval illuminated manuscripts, for I ask them to draw in the margins what the music makes them think of and

then highlight the themes themselves in the colors they "sound" like. (Interestingly, everyone seems to agree that the March in D from the *Anna Magdalena Notebook* is bright golden yellow).

In my studio we'll sometimes mime the music, or choreograph hand gestures à la Mark Morris. Students will have research hunts (e.g., find out what kind of clothes the nobility wore in 18th century Europe) before we embark on, say, a Lully minuet or a Bach French suite. Knowing that the men wore elaborate wigs and high heels to court gives them an entirely different understanding of "dance tempo."

By using a child's naturally occurring abilities—whether they be verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, logical-mathematical or kinesthetic, the music comes alive. It is translated to a system that they are already intimately familiar with and adept at. By taking a *non*musical approach to musical education, ironically the students become better, more advanced and more passionate musicians.

For those new parents who would like to have music be an integral part of their children's lives, I offer the following "recipe" for creating budding virtuosos:

- Provide a steady stream of high quality musical recordings from birth (Mozart, yes, but even more, Bach) with a wide range of instrumental combinations and moods and expressions.
- Practice an instrument yourself, even at a beginning level, or at the very least, sing and dance with your baby while you listen to CDs. Let your child "catch" your enthusiasm for music.
- Enroll in an early childhood program that combines music and movement with parent participation. Music Together, Kindermusik and Music Garden all have good things to offer.
- Around age 3 or 4, seek out any Orff or Dalcroze Eurythmics offerings in your area (found through community music centers, conservatory prep programs or in progressive preschools). The underlying philosophies of both of these programs encourage both conceptual and creative understanding of music in age-appropriate ways.
- Find the very best teacher you possibly can, one who is both an excellent musician and extremely skilled at working with young children, and begin lessons between 4 and 6 years of age.
- If your child doesn't seem particularly musical at first, do not despair. Find ways to connect the music they are studying to the things they are already good at.
- Continue making music a family endeavor by playing duets, going to concerts, and listening to and talking about new music together.

Following this recipe may not yield a concert pianist, but it will certainly produce a home brimming with the joy of music. ■

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Nancy M. Robinson, Ph.D.
Seattle, WA
November 1993
National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
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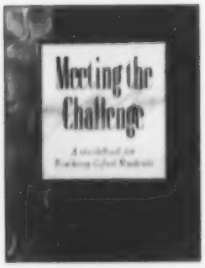

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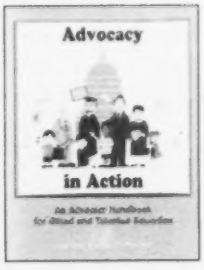

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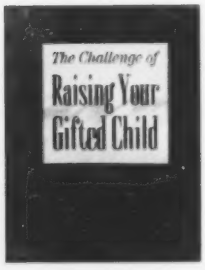

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